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A Rhetorical Study of the Lectures and Sermons of Russell H. Conwell.

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A RHETORICAL STUDY OF THE LECTURES AND SERMONS OF
RUSSELL H. CONWELL

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Speech

by
Mary Louise Gehring
B. A., Baylor University, 1943
M. A., Louisiana State University, 1949
August, 1952

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ABSTRACT

For more than fifty years, Russell H. Conwell was a prominent American speaker, especially on the lecture platform and in the pulpit. The purpose of this dissertation is to make a rhetorical study of his lectures and sermons during those years. The procedure has been (1) to investigate the factors of training and experience affecting Conwell as a speaker, including such aspects as his early environment and education, his adult career, his philosophy of speech, and his techniques of preparation and delivery; (2) to discover the basic premises of his thinking, and his motives and purposes in speaking; (3) to analyze rhetorically various phases of his lectures and sermons, such as the themes upon which he spoke, the forms of the speeches, the kinds of supporting material, and his style; and (4) on the basis of these considerations, to evaluate Conwell's place in American oratory. The major sources of material are (1) his lectures and sermons, published or in manuscript; (2) his other writings; (3) biographies, magazine articles, pamphlets, letters, and other material pertaining to his life and career; and (4) general historical works treating the age in which he lived.

From childhood Conwell seems to have been interested in speakers and in making speeches. The ability

to talk effectively was an asset to him as a soldier, a reporter, a lawyer, a preacher, a lecturer, and an educator. To him, oratory was "the science of effective speech," and the great orator was the one who served humanity. He drew material for his speeches from direct personal experience, observation, inquiries, reading and listening. His well-developed memory was a valuable tool for study.

During his professional career, Conwell apparently never wrote out a speech of any kind. Many topical outlines for his sermons and several for his lectures are extant; however, there is some question whether he used these notes during the actual course of a talk. Almost every report of Conwell's lectures mentions his humor, which seems to have been presented largely through his techniques of mimicry and pantomime. He unquestionably had an expressive voice and a responsive body.

To Russell Conwell, public speaking was both an obligation and a pleasure. He was motivated by the feeling that in his lectures and sermons he must contribute some "gospel truth" toward the "ever-persistent 'call of God.'" He wanted to benefit the community in which he spoke, and he devoted the proceeds from his lectures to educate needy college students. Underlying what he said were his basic premises that the individual could determine his own

destiny, that America was the land of opportunity, that education was the remedy for all social and economic ills, that biography was the best text, and that happiness was the aim of life. His religious faith was simple and largely fundamental, although he was among those who accepted scientific discoveries as no threat to the Bible. The New England environment of his early years was instrumental in shaping his views.

Considered as a unit, Conwell's lectures and sermons have stimulation as their general purpose. Both discuss ways of achieving success and happiness and emphasize service to humanity. The sermons also stress man's relationship to God. The lectures and the sermons are similar in form. His most typical sermon type consisted of text with illustrations, while the lecture generally consisted of a title story or a statement of purpose plus examples. The distributive method of ordering points was characteristic of almost all his speaking. His favorite kind of supporting material was the illustration. Conwell's strength lay in ethical and pathetic, rather than logical proof. In general, his style was clear, vivid and impressive. The lectures contain more direct address and humor than the sermons, while the latter employ heightened emotional language.

Conwell's material achievements, the honors he won, and the reports of his contemporaries indicate that he

was a successful speaker in his own generation. However, he is noteworthy among American orators not for the ideas he expressed nor for the technical excellence of his speeches, but for his ability to communicate with his audience effectively and for his position as a spokesman for his generation. A rhetorical study of his lectures and sermons adds to the sum total of information on American public address.

A RHETORICAL STUDY OF THE LECTURES AND SERMONS OF
RUSSELL H. CONWELL

INTRODUCTION

Russell H. Conwell enjoyed a long and flourishing career as an orator on the American scene. He made his first recorded public speeches in Lincoln's day and was still addressing the American people after Coolidge had been elected to the Presidency. He lived through the Civil War, reconstruction, the industrialization of the United States, the era of muckrakers and progressives, the Spanish-American War and World War I. He was making speeches to thousands before de Forest was born but for some of his last lectures and sermons used de Forest's brain-child, radio. He was soldier, newspaperman, lawyer, preacher, educator, and lecturer. He filled many lyceum and Chautauqua engagements, lecturing an average of 210 times per year.¹ During his forty-three years as pastor in Philadelphia of Grace Baptist Church, also called the Baptist Temple, he saw the membership of his congregation grow from less than 300 to one of the largest among Protestant churches of the United States. In a period when public speaking was more extensive than in previous

¹ Russell H. Conwell, "Now My Idea Is This!" Philadelphia Evening Public Ledger, February 16, 1924, p. 8.

years,² Conwell was one of the country's better known speakers.

Because of the significance of the time in which he lived and because of his prominence as a speaker, Russell H. Conwell is a suitable personality for study in the field of American public address. Apparently there have been only two graduate studies pertaining to Conwell in any field. The first, in point of time, is Marie Siemon Duffy's "The Philadelphia Award," which contains a biographical sketch of him as second winner of the award.³ The second is the writer's own thesis, "The Invention of Russell H. Conwell in his Lecture, 'Acres of Diamonds.'"⁴ It seems appropriate, then, to make a broader and more comprehensive study of the man as a speaker. Conwell practiced law for approximately fifteen years, but law was not an area in which he gained

² Kenneth G. Hance, Homer O. Hendrickson, and Edwin W. Schoenberger, "The Later National Period: 1860-1930," A History and Criticism of American Public Address (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1943), I, 151.

³ Marie Siemon Duffy, "The Philadelphia Award" (Unpublished master's thesis, Temple University, 1932), pp. 68-72.

⁴ Mary Louise Gehring, "The Invention of Russell H. Conwell in his Lecture, 'Acres of Diamonds'" (Unpublished master's thesis, Louisiana State University, 1949).

great fame nor is it one in which texts of speeches are available. Therefore, this study will be limited to Conwell's lecturing and preaching.

Procedure

In order to study a man's speaking, it is necessary to know something of his preparation and background. Accordingly, the first chapter of this dissertation concerns itself with the factors of training and experience affecting Conwell as a speaker. In it are considered biographical factors, his speaking career and his general philosophy of speech -- both as to theory and practice.

Closely related to his speech training and experience are the beliefs which undergirded his speaking. Chapter Two investigates the basic premises from which he spoke. It surveys his general assumptions and the nature of his religious convictions. It includes an analysis of his motives and purposes in speaking.

Chapter Three studies specifically his lectures. It considers the themes on which he spoke, the forms his lectures took, the kinds of supporting material employed, and his style.

The fourth chapter treats the sermons in the same way.

Chapter Five is one of evaluation. On the basis of what has preceded it undertakes to discover his effectiveness as an orator. There are three considerations: a comparison of the lectures and sermons, Conwell's immediate success as seen in the opinion of his contemporaries and in the accomplishments of his lifetime, and his position in American public address from the perspective of twenty-five years.

General Sources of Material

Several biographies have been written about Dr. Conwell. Naturally, none of these is without reference to his career as a speaker. The earliest, written in 1889, is Scaling the Eagle's Nest, by A. E. Higgins.⁵ Higgins based his work on notes collected by William C. Higgins, who knew Conwell in his youth and served in his company during the Civil War. The book treats in detail Conwell's early life; later biographers draw upon it heavily. Next, in date of publication, is Burdette's Modern Temple and the Templars.⁶ Although it does contain

⁵ A. E. Higgins, Scaling the Eagle's Nest. The Life of Russell H. Conwell, of Philadelphia (Springfield, Massachusetts: James D. Gill, 1889).

⁶ Robert Jones Burdette, Modern Temple and the Templars (New York, Boston, and Chicago: Silver, Burdette and Company, 1894).

a sketch of Conwell's life, this book is primarily concerned with his ministry at Baptist Temple, and the establishing of Temple University. In 1899 Albert Hatcher Smith published The Life of Russell H. Conwell,⁷ a fairly comprehensive survey of Conwell's life and activities up to that time. Considerable attention is given to his early travels as a foreign correspondent and to his lecturing. In 1915 Dr. Conwell brought out "Acres of Diamonds" in book form with the same title; of the 181 pages in the book, 110 are devoted to a biography of Conwell, called His Life and Achievements, by Robert Shackleton.⁸ Much of Shackleton's work is concerned with his own evaluation of the circumstances which influenced Conwell. Agnes Rush Burr, a Philadelphia newspaperwoman, first wrote a biography of him in 1905, under the title, Russell H. Conwell, Founder of the Institutional Church in America, the Work and the Man.⁹

⁷ Albert Hatcher Smith, The Life of Russell H. Conwell (Boston, New York, and Chicago: Silver, Burdette and Company, 1899).

⁸ Russell H. Conwell, Acres of Diamonds with His Life and Achievements by Robert Shackleton (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1915). Harpers re-issued this work in 1950.

⁹ Agnes Rush Burr, Russell H. Conwell, Founder of the Institutional Church in America, the Work and the Man (Philadelphia: The John C. Winston Company, 1905).

In 1917 Miss Burr published an authorized edition of his life, entitled Russell H. Conwell and His Work: One Man's Interpretation of Life.¹⁰ After Dr. Conwell's death, this book was revised by the addition of material on his last years, and in 1926 was re-issued under the same title.¹¹ It is the most complete of the biographies and contains information on all phases of his life. Lengthy sections, sometimes as much as an entire chapter, are direct quotations of interviews with Dr. Conwell. The 1926 edition is the one used herein as the standard Burr work.

Short biographical sketches are found in several other books. William G. Shepherd, in Great Preachers as Seen by a Journalist, has a chapter on "Russell H. Conwell, America's Amazing Man."¹² The cases include a chapter on Conwell in We Called It Culture.¹³

¹⁰ Agnes Rush Burr, Russell H. Conwell and His Work: One Man's Interpretation of Life (Philadelphia: The John C. Winston Company, 1917).

¹¹ Agnes Rush Burr, Russell H. Conwell and His Work: One Man's Interpretation of Life (Philadelphia: The John C. Winston Company, 1926).

¹² William G. Shepherd, Great Preachers as Seen by a Journalist (New York and Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1924), pp. 155-169.

¹³ Victoria and Robert Ormond Case, We Called It Culture (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Incorporated, 1948), pp. 61-70.

Duffy's thesis contains a biographical sketch of Conwell as second winner of the Philadelphia award.

Dr. Conwell's own writings provide a valuable source of material. Probably the best known of these is a greatly expanded version (running to several hundred pages) of his popular lecture, "Acres of Diamonds." Five editions with as many different publishers were released between 1889 and 1902. These editions have slightly different titles and minor variations in content, but for all practical purposes are identical.¹⁴

¹⁴ Acres of Diamonds. How Men and Women May Become Rich. The Safe and Sure Way to Amass a Fortune, Be a Benefactor, and Achieve Greatness. Advice and Examples Adapted to All Classes. (Philadelphia: Miller-Megee Company, 1889).

Acres of Diamonds: Our Everyday Opportunities and Their Wondrous, Unsuspected Riches. An Original Presentation from the Standpoint of To-Day of the Master Motives That Determine Success in Life. Practical Directions and Incentives for Worthily Acquiring Wealth and Achieving Distinction, Enforced by a Graphic Recital of the Example, the Struggles and Triumphs of Noted Successful Men and Women, Representing Every Department of American Life. A Volume of Help and Cheer for Every Person of Either Sex, Who Cherishes the High Resolve of Getting on in the World and Sustaining a Career of Usefulness and Honor. (Philadelphia and St. Louis: John Y. Huber Company, 1890).

Acres of Diamonds; or How Men Get Rich Honestly. Our Every-day Opportunities and Their Wondrous, Unsuspected Riches. An Original Presentation from the Standpoint of To-Day of the Master Motives that Determine Success in Life. Practical Directions and Incentives for Worthily Acquiring Wealth and Achieving Distinction, Enforced by a Graphic Recital of the Example, the Struggles and Triumphs of Noted Successful Men and Women, Representing Every Department of American Life. A Volume of Help and Cheer for Every Person of Either Sex, Who Cherishes the High Resolve of Getting (Cont.)

He wrote several popular biographies of prominent persons. For their respective presidential campaigns, he sketched the lives of Hayes,¹⁵ Garfield,¹⁶ and Blaine.¹⁷ In each biography there was a brief section on the Republican Vice-Presidential nominee. Similar to these biographies is a volume on the lives of the Presidents of the United States,

¹⁴ (Cont.) on in the World and Sustaining a Career of Usefulness and Honor. (Philadelphia: Temple Magazine Publishing Company, 1893).

Acres of Diamonds: Our Everyday Opportunities and Their Wondrous Riches. (Philadelphia: G. W. Bishop, 1893).

Present Successful Opportunities. An Original Presentation from the Standpoint of To-day of the Master-Motives and Methods that Determine Success in Life in Connection with the Author's Great Lecture "Acres of Diamonds." A Graphic Recital of the Example, the Struggles and Triumphs of Successful Men and Women, Representing Every Department of American Life -- A Volume for Every Person of Either Sex, who Cherishes the High Resolve of Sustaining a Career of Usefulness and Honor. (Philadelphia: The Temple Press, 1902).

¹⁵ Life and Public Services of Gov. Rutherford B. Hayes (Boston: B. B. Russell, 1876).

¹⁶ The Life, Speeches and Public Services of Gen. James A. Garfield of Ohio (Boston: B. B. Russell and Company, 1880). After Garfield's assassination, this book was reissued without the section on Arthur and with chapters on Garfield's inauguration and assassination under the title: The Life, Speeches, and Public Services of James A. Garfield, Twentieth President of the United States. Including an Account of His Assassination, Lingering Pain, Death, and Burial. (Portland, Maine: G. Stevenson, 1881).

¹⁷ The Life and Public Services of James G. Blaine, with Incidents, Anecdotes, and Romantic Events Connected with His Early Life; Containing also His Speeches and Important Historical Documents Relating to His Later Years. (Augusta, Maine: E. C. Allen and Company, 1884). The same work was also published in Springfield, Massachusetts, by the Enterprise Publishing Company, 1884, and in Muskegon by J. E. Lovelace, 1884.

which Conwell wrote in collaboration with John S. C. Abbott.¹⁸ Conwell's part was the biographies of four Presidents and the last chapter, "The Hundred Years' Progress of the Nation." Others of his biographical works concern the lives of Bayard Taylor,¹⁹ Joshua Gianavella,²⁰ Charles Haddon Spurgeon,²¹ and John Wanamaker.²²

He also published several works of an inspirational or religious nature²³ and miscellaneous other full-length

¹⁸ Lives of the Presidents of the United States of America, from Washington to the Present Time. Containing a Narrative of the Most Interesting Events in the Career of Each President; Thus Constituting a Graphic History of the United States. To Which Is Added a Chapter Showing the Hundred Years' Progress of the Republic. (Portland, Maine: H. Hallett and Company, 1882). This work was enlarged and reissued under the same title and by the same publisher in 1893.

¹⁹ The Life, Travels, and Literary Career of Bayard Taylor. (Boston: B. B. Russell and Company, 1879). This same volume was later reissued by the following companies: D. Lathrop and Company of Boston in 1881 and 1884; The Werner Company of Chicago, 1895.

²⁰ Joshua Gianavella: "Captain of the Vineyards of Lucerna." The Waldensian Hero. A Historical Sketch. (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1884).

²¹ Life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon the World's Great Preacher (Philadelphia [?]: Edgewood Publishing Company, 1892).

²² Romantic Rise of a Great American (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1924).

²³ The New Day or, Fresh Opportunities -- A Book for Young Men (Philadelphia: The Griffith and Rowland Press, 1904).

How to Live the Christ Life (New York and Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1912). (Cont.)

books.²⁴

There are, of course, a number of articles by or about Dr. Conwell,²⁵ as well as numerous newspaper

²³ (Cont.) How a Soldier May Succeed after the War, "The Corporal with the Book" (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1918).
Effective Prayer (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1921).

Unused Powers (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1922).

Six Nights in the Garden of Gethsemane (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1924).

²⁴ Why and How. Why the Chinese Emigrate, and the Means They Adopt for the Purpose of Reaching America (Boston: Lee and Shepard; New York: Lee, Shepard and Dillingham, 1871).

Woman and the Law; a Comparison of the Rights of Men and the Rights of Women Before the Law (Boston: B. B. Russell; Philadelphia: The Quaker City Publishing House, 1876).

History of the Great Fire in Boston, November 9 and 10, 1872 (Boston: B. B. Russell, 1873).

History of the Great Fire in St. John, June 20 and 21, 1877 (Boston: B. B. Russell, 1877).

Why Lincoln Laughed (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1922).

²⁵ Among these are:

Bruce Barton and Russell H. Conwell, "Conversation between a Young Man and an Old Man," American Magazine, XCII (July 1921), 13-15, 108-112.

Charles E. Beury, "The Evolution and Emergence of Temple University," School and Society, XXIII (1926), 633-637.

Dale Carnegie, "Has Delivered One Lecture 5,000 Times," American Magazine, LXXX (September 1915), 55.

Russell H. Conwell, "Origin of 'Acres of Diamonds,'" American Magazine, LXXXI (April 1916), 100-102.

Russell H. Conwell, "What You Can Do with your Will Power," American Magazine, LXXX (April 1916), 16, 96-100.

W. C. Crosby, "Acres of Diamonds," American Mercury, XIV (May 1928), 104.

(Cont.)

reports.²⁶ Several memorial and special issues of Temple University publications are devoted to his career.²⁷ There is some published material in various pamphlets.²⁸

Another source is the private papers, letters, et cetera, of, to, or about Dr. Conwell available at the Sullivan Memorial Library, Temple University. Among the

²⁵ (Cont.) Hajoca Industrial and Marine Commentator, V (February 1943), entire issue.

Robert Shackleton, "A Great Accomplisher," Harper's Magazine, CXXXII (December 1915), 134.

Stuart H. Thompson, "A Great American," The Cornstalk, III (April 1935), entire issue.

Thane Wilson, "Russell H. Conwell who has helped 3000 Young Men to Succeed," American Magazine, LXXXI (April 1916), 15-16.

²⁶ Among these are:

Russell H. Conwell, "Now My Idea Is This!" Philadelphia Evening Public Ledger, February 15 and 16, 1924, pp. 10 and 8 respectively.

C. William Duncan, "Dean Stauffer Recalls Tales and Scenes in Conwell's Life," Philadelphia Evening Public Ledger, February 13, 1934, p. 10.

"Russell H. Conwell -- the Washington and Lincoln of a later Age," Temple University News, February 12, 1929, pp. 1-11 (features section).

There are also numerous newspaper reports of his various lectures in papers all over the nation.

²⁷ Temple University Weekly, February 13, 1922 (special founder's day number).

Temple University Weekly, February 8, 1923 (special founder's day number).

Temple University Weekly, December 11, 1925 ("Russell H. Conwell Memorial Issue").

Temple University Weekly, December 18, 1925 (issue devoted to funeral service for Dr. Conwell).

Temple University Bulletin, XVI (December 1933), 7, 9-12.

²⁸ "Acres of Diamonds: A Man, a Lecture, a University," publicity booklet issued by Temple University; n.d. (Cont.)

most valuable of these items are Dr. Conwell's memorandum books, covering his engagements from July 4, 1900, to December 31, 1909. William S. Delp's notes, "Lectures on Oratory," taken during a class he had under Conwell, are an important source of material on Conwell's philosophy of speech.

Miss Jane Tuttle, granddaughter of Dr. Conwell, has an extensive collection of papers, notes and letters, which she permitted the author to inspect. Especially useful are the notebooks of sermon outlines and the notes used for a few of the lectures. In the latter category are two outlines used at different times, presumably, for "Artemus Ward," which are the only known records of what was included in that lecture. There is a similar outline for "Garibaldi."

The Civil War papers in the National Archives, Washington, D. C., contain Conwell's military record. The attorney roll of the United States Supreme Court

²⁸ (Cont.) Arthur Emerson Harris, "Personal Glimpses of Russell H. Conwell being Certain Personal Reminiscences Together with Selections from Letters," n. d.

Edgar C. Lane, "A Brief History of Tremont Temple from 1839 to 1950," n. d., pp. 4-7.

"The History of Temple," pamphlet issued by Historical Committee of Grace Baptist Church, Philadelphia, n. d.

shows his admission to practice before that body.

Sources of Speech Texts

Because Conwell never wrote out his speeches, there are not many available texts. This is particularly true of his lectures. Of the many that he delivered, there are only five which have been located in complete form.

The most popular and most frequently recorded of his platform lectures is "Acres of Diamonds." The earliest published version is a "condensed form" of the lecture as it was delivered in the Amphitheatre, Chautauqua, New York, on Tuesday, August 3, 1886.²⁹ Identical copies of the report, originally made for the Chautauqua Herald,³⁰ are found in Gleams of Grace³¹ and in Acres of Diamonds³²

²⁹ Russell H. Conwell, "Introduction," Gleams of Grace (Philadelphia: Business Men's Association of Grace Baptist Church, 1887).

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., pp. 83-100.

³² Russell H. Conwell, Acres of Diamonds. Some Sermons on the Life that Now Is, Which Point with a Lively Faith to the Heavenly Home. A Lecture is Included. (Cleveland, Ohio: F. M. Barton Company, 1905), pp. 1-17.) This work and Gleams of Grace not only contain the same version of "Acres of Diamonds" but also have their eight sermons in common.

as published by Barton.

Several of the biographies contain "Acres of Diamonds." Smith's The Life of Russell H. Conwell, referred to above, has a summary of that speech in the Appendix. A complete version of "Acres of Diamonds" is found in the volume of the same name, which consists largely of the Shackleton biography of Conwell.³³ Each of Miss Burr's three books on Conwell contains a copy of "Acres of Diamonds."³⁴ The speech is identical in the 1917 and 1926 editions.

There is a stenographic transcript of "Acres of Diamonds" which was made at the five thousandth delivery, May 21, 1914.³⁵ The edited form of this transcript was that used by Shackleton (mentioned above) and published in the Temple Review.³⁶ We Called It Culture prints the same version as the later Burr books.³⁷

³³ Pp. 3-59. (See Footnote 8, p. 4.)

³⁴ It is published on pp. 317-344 in the 1905 work. Through coincidence, the speech appears on pp. 405-548 in both the 1917 and 1926 publications.

³⁵ Stenographic transcript by Harry Julier Quay of speech as delivered at the Academy of Music, Philadelphia, Thursday, May 21, 1914; deposited in Conwellana Collection, Sullivan Memorial Library, Temple University.

³⁶ Published serially in five successive issues of Vol. XXIII (1914-1915) of the magazine: No. 28, pp. 7-10; No. 29, pp. 7, 9-10; No. 30, pp. 6-7, 9-12; No. 31, pp. 6-7, 10-11; and No. 32, pp. 9-12.

³⁷ Pp. 243-272.

The same speech also appears in "Acres of Diamonds: A Man, a Lecture, a University."³⁸ Another version of the speech is published in the 1901 and 1936 editions of Modern Eleguence.³⁹

As far as is known, there are no other English copies of "Acres of Diamonds" in its entirety.⁴⁰ Edwin Stanton De Poncet made a Spanish translation of the complete speech in 1923.⁴¹

"Personal Glimpses of Celebrated Men and Women" appears in three places. The first of these is the 1905

³⁸ Pp. 7-46.

³⁹ Modern Eleguence (edited by Thomas Read; Philadelphia: Morris, 1901), IV, 307-338.

Modern Eleguence (edited by Ashley H. Thorndike, revised by Adam Ward; New York: P. F. Collier and Son, 1936), XIII, 140-170.

⁴⁰ The Arab guide's story for which the lecture was named, has been lifted from the speech and printed several times:

"Acres of Diamonds," Reading and Literature (edited by Melvin E. Haggerty; Yonkers-on-Hudson, New York and Chicago, Illinois: World Book Company, 1927), I, 511-515. This is an exact reprint of the story as given in the full version of the speech in Shackleton.

"Origin of 'Acres of Diamonds.'"

"Acres of Diamonds," Temple University Weekly, December 11, 1925, p. 11.

"The Arab's Guide Story [sic] of 'Acres of Diamonds,' as Told by Dr. Russell H. Conwell," Temple University Owl, VI (February 1934), 31-32.

⁴¹ Acres de diamantes; traducido del ingles al espanol por Edwin Stanton De Poncet (Boston: The Stratford Company, 1923).

Burr biography.⁴² The second is the Temple Review.⁴³ The third is the Conwellana Collection, Temple University, which has three typescripts. One of these typescripts is apparently the original, as transcribed by the stenographer, with corrections marked in Dr. Conwell's handwriting; a second is another copy of the original with no corrections; the third is the original, incorporating Dr. Conwell's corrections.

"The Silver Crown or Born a King," as delivered Thanksgiving evening, 1914, is in the Temple Review.⁴⁴ Observation: -- Every Man His Own University⁴⁵ expands "The Silver Crown." In fact, according to the "Foreword," it includes verbatim portions of the address:

The lecture, "The Silver Crown," which the author has been giving in various forms for 50

⁴² Pp. 345-365.

⁴³ Published serially in seven issues of Vol. XXIII (1914-1915) of the magazine: No. 20, pp. 7-9, 15; No. 21, pp. 7-9, 15; No. 22, pp. 7, 15; No. 23, pp. 6-7, 11, 15; No. 24, pp. 7, 15; No. 25, pp. 6-7, 15; and No. 27, pp. 10-13. Delivered in the Temple February 20, 1915.

⁴⁴ Published serially in five successive issues of Vol. XXIII (1914-1915) of the magazine: No. 3, pp. 7-9; No. 4, pp. 8-9; No. 5, pp. 6-8; No. 6, pp. 7-9, 16; and No. 7, pp. 6-9, 14-15.

⁴⁵ Russell H. Conwell, Observation: -- Every Man His Own University (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1917).

years, is herein printed from a stenographic report of one address on this general subject. It will not be found all together, as a lecture, for this book is an attempt to give further suggestions on the many different ways in which the subject has been treated, just as the lecture has varied in its illustrations from time to time.⁴⁶

Chapters One through Six seem to be the parts which come from an actual lecture. They approach oral style far more closely than do the remaining eleven chapters. The development of ideas is frequently through conversations; the first person is used extensively in these early chapters but is almost non-existent in the remainder of the book.

"The Angel's Lily" appears in the book of the same name.⁴⁷ The "Foreword" seems to indicate that it is an actual transcript:

In the publication of this lecture, and the accompanying chapters concerning the history of Temple University, we believe we are doing a plain duty to the public. We obtained Doctor Conwell's reluctant consent to the use of the lecture, as it was never his purpose to publish it in book form.

Doctor Conwell varies his illustrations to fit different occasions, and while there is much in his manner, emphasis, and voice which cannot be expressed in print, yet we feel that in this

⁴⁶ Ibid., no page number.

⁴⁷ Russell H. Conwell, The Angel's Lily (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1920), pp. 3-44.

report of the lecture on "The Angel's Lily" we have secured an accurate record of one of the most interesting and instructive of his addresses.⁴⁸

"The Jolly Earthquake" was published in 1917.⁴⁹

A "Note" states:

This is the most recent and complete form of "The Jolly Earthquake." It is the full stenographic report of the lecture, delivered to a large and enthusiastic audience in the Baptist Temple, Philadelphia, of which Dr. Conwell has been for 36 years the honored Pastor. It is only fair to the reader to add that Dr. Conwell varies much from time to time in his use of illustrations in his lectures, although the main theme is the same.⁵⁰

These five are the only examples of his platform lectures known to be extant in complete form. As mentioned in the section above, there are outlines of "Artemus Ward" and "Garibaldi."

There are six miscellaneous addresses to particular audiences. One is a speech at the opening of the Philadelphia home for the orphans of policemen, firemen and railroadmen, July 29, 1899.⁵¹ A second is

⁴⁸ Ibid., no page number.

⁴⁹ Russell H. Conwell, The Jolly Earthquake or the Power of a Cheerful Spirit (Philadelphia: Harvey M. Shelley, 1917).

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 7.

⁵¹ Russell H. Conwell, "Address at the opening of the Philadelphia Orphans' Home at Broad and Rockland Streets (Logan Station), July 29, 1899." There is no other publication data except the notation, "Printed by order of the Corporation for free distribution."

an annual address to the graduates of the Pierce School of Business.⁵² The third is "Hardware in Human Civilization,"⁵³ delivered to the twenty-sixth annual convention of the National Hardware Association in Atlantic City. "The Value of Probation,"⁵⁴ a talk given under the auspices of the Educational Department of the Philadelphia Municipal Court, is the fourth. The fifth is "Honorable Benjamin F. Butler," presented for the Aurora Club of Boston in 1874.⁵⁵ The last is "Let There Be Light," a commencement address in 1876 at Wilbraham Academy.⁵⁶

Dr. Conwell permitted the publication of several collections of his sermons. In point of time, the first was Gleams of Grace (1887), which contains

⁵² "Annual Address by Russell H. Conwell, President of Temple College, to graduates of Pierce School of Business." No other publication data given. The use of the term "Temple College" indicates that the address was given between 1888, the date the charter for Temple College was issued, and 1907, the date when the name was legally changed to Temple University.

⁵³ Russell H. Conwell, "Hardware in Human Civilization" (Philadelphia: National Hardware Association of the United States). The pamphlet is not dated, but the address was given October 20, 1920.

⁵⁴ Russell H. Conwell, "The Value of Probation," Public Service Addresses; Series 1921-1922, No. 9. Delivered in the City Hall, Philadelphia, Friday December 23, 1921.

⁵⁵ Russell H. Conwell, "Honorable Benjamin F. Butler" (Boston: The Aurora Club, 1874).

⁵⁶ Smith, pp. 316-335.

eight sermons, to which is added "Acres of Diamonds."

The same collection was reissued in 1905 under the title Acres of Diamonds. Sermons for the Great Days of the Year⁵⁷ appeared in 1922; Borrowed Axes, and Other Sermons⁵⁸ in 1923; and Fields of Glory⁵⁹ in 1925.

In addition to these collections, three single sermons appear in book form -- "Little Bo,"⁶⁰ "He Goeth Before You,"⁶¹ and "Above the Snake Line."⁶²

The most important source of sermon texts is a series of periodicals published in Philadelphia from 1889 until Conwell's death in 1925. Over twelve hundred sermons appear here. Most of the sermons printed in the

⁵⁷ Sermons for the Great Days of the Year (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1922).

⁵⁸ Borrowed Axes, and Other Sermons (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1923).

⁵⁹ Fields of Glory (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1925).

⁶⁰ Little Bo: A Study in the Ninth of John (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publishing Society, 1893). Little Bo was reissued as: Brightening Cloud: A Study in the Ninth of John (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1926).

⁶¹ He Goeth Before You (Cleveland, Ohio: F. M. Barton Company, 1909). Another edition of the same work was brought out in 1910.

⁶² Clayton Morrison, editor, The American Pulpit (Chicago: The Christian Century Press, 1925), pp. 59-73. This book contains sermons by twenty-five of the "foremost living preachers," selected by a poll of 25,000 Protestant ministers in the United States.

collections were first published in one of these periodicals. The original magazine was The Temple Pulpit, its first issue being dated "September, 1889." In addition to this issue, Volume One had three numbers in October, four in November and two in December. After the first issue of Volume Two, the numbers are not dated (although the sermons therein generally are) until Volume Three, Number Sixteen, which is dated August 21, 1891. To confuse the matter more, beginning with Volume Three, Number Two, the magazine appears under the title of The Temple Magazine. With Volume Five the size become tabloid and the paging is consecutive throughout the volume regardless of the issue number. Publication of The Temple Magazine seems to have stopped with Volume Nine, Number Four (March 1897). The True Philadelphian began publication in October, 1897, with the statement, "The Editors . . . desire to announce that it [sic] has no connection with the Magazine which formerly published Mr. Conwell's [sic] sermons." After five volumes (two were published each year), The True Philadelphian became The Temple Review with Volume Six, Number One, dated April 6, 1900. This title was kept through 1923 (Volume Thirty-one). There were sometimes two volumes per year and again there might be only one. It was generally published weekly but there were several summers when it appeared only monthly.

At first paging was consecutive through each volume; however, from Volume Ten (first issue dated April 4, 1902), Number Three, paging began at one with each issue. Beginning in 1924, Conwell's sermons were published in pamphlet form in a series known as The Temple Pulpit. Each number consisted of a single sermon. These were published about once a week through the winter of 1924-1925 and the spring of 1925. Some were dated and some were not. Publication was suspended during the summer, but was resumed in October. The last issue seems to have been Number Thirty-nine of Volume One, dated December 6, 1925. In all the series from 1889 on, the sermons are generally represented as stenographic transcripts with the name of the recording stenographer frequently given.⁶³

⁶³ The Conwellana collection, Temple University, has bound volumes of these periodicals with the exception of the second Temple Pulpit series, which is unbound. The set is complete with the exception of an occasional missing issue and Volume XXVII (1919) of the Temple Review.

CHAPTER ONE

FACTORS OF TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE AFFECTING CONWELL AS A SPEAKER

To appreciate and to understand fully a man's speaking, it is almost essential to know something of his background. What forces in his life influenced him to become a speaker? How extensive was his actual speaking career? What was his philosophy of speech? This chapter seeks to answer these questions. In the first section, Conwell's speech training, determined from biographical factors, is presented. The second section traces his professional career as lecturer and preacher. The third and fourth sections are concerned with his philosophy of speech. The former investigates his theory as revealed in his writings and in his class in oratory. The latter studies what he actually did. It considers how he went about preparing his speeches and how he delivered them. A consideration of the actual content of the lectures and sermons is reserved for chapters three and four.

Speech Training: Biographical Factors

Born in the Massachusetts Berkshires in 1843, Russell Conwell had the good fortune to have parents

who were interested in more of the world than their own small farm. His father, Martin Conwell, operated a station in the Underground Railway. In connection with this activity John Brown and Frederick Douglass visited the Conwell home, and Russell met them.¹ His mother, Miranda Conwell, made a habit of reading to her children every Sunday afternoon. Among the things she read were articles from the New York Tribune, the Atlantic Monthly, and the National Era; letters from foreign correspondents as published in the Tribune; Uncle Tom's Cabin; the sermons of Henry Ward Beecher; and the Bible.² Thus, through his parents, Russell came in contact with current events, heard accounts of popular speeches, and met at least one eminent orator.

The father's philosophy had a marked effect on the son in later years. The following paragraph gives one of Russell's recollections:

After our simple repast, . . . my father always read the Bible and led in the family prayers He was a strong believer in the duty of every prayerful Christian to answer his own prayers when he could do so; and he taught his children to believe that it was wrong to ask the Lord to do anything for them which they could do for themselves. . . . He said that neither God nor man is going to push the team of a man who is lying beside

¹ Acres of Diamonds (Shackleton), pp. 66-67

² Burr, p. 62

the road smoking.³

Martin Conwell influenced his son in the belief that hard work is necessary for success.

All of the biographers give accounts of Russell's early interest in making speeches. Higgins says that before the child could speak plainly he delivered sermons to the cat, and that later he "anathematized the weeds before he cut them down."⁴ To such stories as these Smith adds: "It was while hoeing corn in the back field, and committing to memory a speech delivered by Kossuth . . . that Russell resolved to be an orator."⁵ He gained experience with human audiences in school programs and in a weekly debating society which he organized at the age of twelve.⁶

Although he was not a brilliant student, Conwell did have a "thirst for information . . . so keen that . . . he was continually sending for pamphlets, circulars and newspapers . . ."⁷ He formed the habit of "writing to prominent men and asking them

³ Ibid., p. 34

⁴ Pp. 37-38.

⁵ P. 46.

⁶ Higgins, p. 38.

⁷ Burr, p. 60.

anything he wanted to know."⁸ This practice was a part of his speech preparation in later years.

When he was fourteen, Russell entered Wilbraham Academy, a Methodist preparatory school. The Academy records indicate that he remained there two years.⁹ Wilbraham was, in the words of its charter, "established for the purpose of promoting religion and morality and the education of youth."¹⁰ Among the courses offered were English, mental and moral science, rhetoric, mathematics, philosophy, botany, astronomy, geology, bookkeeping, ancient and modern languages, history, elocution, and political economy.¹¹ Caldwell's Elocution¹² and Jamieson's Rhetoric¹³ were two texts then in use at Wilbraham. Conwell's chief delight was in the debating societies,¹⁴ of which there were two:

⁸ Smith, p. 47.

⁹ Letter from Alumni Office, Wilbraham Academy, to Mary L. Gehring; dated January 10, 1949.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Merritt Caldwell, A Practical Manual of Elocution (Philadelphia: Sorin and Ball, 1845).

¹³ Alexander Jamieson, A Grammar of Rhetoric and Polite Literature (New Haven: A. H. Maltby and Co., 1826).

¹⁴ Burr, op. cit., p. 96.

the Old Club and the Union Philosophical Society or "Philo."¹⁵ Russell joined the former, which, having been founded in 1826, claimed to be the oldest society of its kind in a preparatory school in the United States.¹⁶ His first attempt at public debate in Wilbraham was a miserable failure. He wrote out a speech, memorized it, then forgot all the speech except the first sentence or two, and retired in shame.¹⁷ That was the last time he ever tried to use a memorized speech. In concluding an account of this embarrassing incident, he said:

For many months I could not be persuaded to try it again until brought out, unexpectedly, from my positive retreat by being called upon to say something at a funeral of one of the boys, who had been my playmate at school. The ease with which I did that without any previous preparation warned me that, if I would succeed, I must be very careful to be natural.

Hence, in my life's work, I have never written a lecture or a sermon and have dictated my books.¹⁸

To help finance his education, Russell dropped out of Wilbraham during the spring terms and worked in

¹⁵ Letter from Wilbraham Alumni Office.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Burr, p. 97.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 98.

the schools at South Worthington and Blandford, Massachusetts.¹⁹ Later he earned money by selling the biography of John Brown,²⁰ which had been brought out by James Redpath soon after Brown's execution. As book salesman Conwell began what might be called his first systematic series of public addresses. Burr reports:

He obtained permission from the school authorities in the districts which he visited to speak to the school children upon the life of John Brown; and he visited regularly the various schools throughout that part of Massachusetts and delivered addresses upon the life of the man whom he had known as a boy²¹

Conwell's interest in contemporary oratory led him to visit New York in February, 1860. In writing of this trip, he says:

I had previously read and studied the great models of eloquence,²² and was then in New York,

¹⁹ Smith, p. 56

²⁰ James Redpath, The Public Life of Captain John Brown (Boston: Thayer and Eldridge, 1860).

²¹ P. 99.

²² Jamieson's rhetoric is illustrated with selections chiefly from the British classics. By this time Conwell may have been familiar with David A. Harsha's Orators and Statesmen (New York: Charles Scribner, 1854), a work containing lives and speech excerpts of Demosthenes, Cicero, Chatham, Burke, Grattan, Fox, Erskine, Curran, Sheridan, Pitt, Canning, Brougham, Patrick Henry, Fisher Ames, Clay, Calhoun, Webster and Everett. Conwell's copy of Harsha, now in the library of Temple University, is extensively underlined.

using my carefully hoarded pennies to hear Henry Ward Beecher, Doctor R. S. Stone, Doctor Storrs, Doctor Bellows, Archbishop McCloskey, and other orators of current fame.²³

Through an invitation by William Cullen Bryant, Conwell heard Lincoln's Cooper Union address, a speech which greatly impressed him.²⁴

In the fall of 1860 he entered Yale. A hotel job helped him earn expense money. According to Arthur T. Hadley, an official historian of the school, one characteristic of Yale in the nineteenth century was "her relative poverty."²⁵

Professors and students . . . both had to work for a living. . . . It created an esprit de corps which would otherwise have been unobtainable. It fostered a democratic spirit among the students. Poor and rich were associated together in their work and in their play. Men were judged by their strength and efficiency as men rather than by their pecuniary standing in the outside world.²⁵

Conwell did not find Yale thus. He was sensitive over his poverty; consequently, he went to classes "solitary

²³ Why Lincoln Laughed, p. 12.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 9, 12, 21.

²⁵ "Yale," Four American Universities (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1895), p. 52.

²⁶ Ibid.

and friendless."²⁷ Burr quotes him as saying that it was at this time he became an agnostic.²⁸ He joined the "free-thinkers" club²⁹ and increasingly "grew more bitter and cynical . . . studying the Bible to find material to support his [atheistic] views."³⁰ In later life, the memory of his poverty and struggles at Yale caused Conwell to devote the proceeds of his lectures to assisting needy college students.³¹

At the outbreak of the Civil War, he enlisted as a private; however, because he was under age, his father had him released.³² Young Conwell had to find other channels for his patriotism. He "suddenly became famous in Western Massachusetts as a patriotic speaker."³³ "He was in demand everywhere for recruiting purposes . . ."³⁴ Higgins reports that at one of these meetings so many bouquets were thrown to him that they had to be carted away in large clothes hampers.³⁵

²⁷ Burr, pp. 102-103.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 20-21.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 104.

³¹ Ibid., pp. 310-311.

³² Ibid., p. 110.

³³ Higgins, p. 42.

³⁴ Burr, p. 110.

³⁵ P. 42.

When he was nineteen, Russell raised a company known as the "Mountain Boys" and was elected unanimously to its captaincy.³⁶ Higgins ascribes Conwell's election to his speaking ability:

. . . it seems now so strange that old men would have been willing to be led into battle under the command of such a country boy. But it was his fascinating eloquence which won him the hearts of all I well remember when our regiment [the 46th Massachusetts] was being recruited how absurd it seemed to us older men to think of his appointment as an officer, until we heard him speak.³⁷

The Mountain Boys saw service in North Carolina.³⁸ Upon the expiration of his nine months' enlistment, Conwell returned to Massachusetts. He was sick with fever the greater part of the summer of 1863 but re-enlisted for a term of three years.³⁹ During the period between enlistments he probably delivered his first regular lyceum lecture. Higgins reports:

In 1863 or 1864 I think, when he re-enlisted after one term of service, he delivered his first lyceum lecture His lecture that evening was on some historical subject, bearing on the benefits of previous wars, and was delivered for the students of Mt. Holyoke Seminary in Hadley, Massachusetts.⁴⁰

³⁶ Burr, pp. 112-113.

³⁷ Pp. 55-56.

³⁸ Burr, p. 116.

³⁹ Smith, pp. 70-71.

⁴⁰ Pp. 43-44.

There were two events in his second enlistment which Conwell reported as especially influential. The first was the Johnny Ring episode. Ring, who served as Conwell's orderly, lost his life in an attempt to preserve the captain's dress sword, a gift from his men. Conwell describes the effect in the following words:

When I stood beside the body of John Ring and realized that he had died for love of me, I made a vow that has formed my life. I vowed that from that moment I would live not only my own life, but that I would also live the life of John Ring. And from that moment I have worked sixteen hours every day -- eight for John Ring's work and eight hours for my own. . . .

It was through John Ring and his giving his life through devotion to me that I became a Christian This did not come about immediately, but it came before the war was over, and it came through faithful Johnnie Ring.⁴¹

The second event was his conversion to Christianity, which, Conwell reports, occurred when he was wounded and left for dead on the Kenesaw Mountain battlefield.⁴² It is difficult to establish that Conwell was ever officially at Kenesaw Mountain. His company was stationed in North Carolina. The men had not received their pay for some

⁴¹ Acres of Diamonds (Shackleton), pp. 70-74. Smith records the incident on pp. 70-75; Burr tells it on pp. 125-130. The Record of the Massachusetts Volunteers 1861-1865 (Boston: The Adjutant General, 1868), I, 525, records the death of "John Q. Ring, Corp.," of Conwell's company, March 13, 1864, at Beaufort, North Carolina.

⁴² Burr, p. 133; Smith, p. 75.

time, and Conwell had gone to headquarters to investigate the delay. In his absence the Confederates attacked, and he was court-martialled for being AWOL. His biographers state that the sentence was never carried out, that he was promoted and transferred to General McPherson's staff in Georgia. However, War Department records in the National Archives indicate that his service terminated with the court-martial.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ The report of his biographers is substantially the same as that which appears printed in campaign literature when he ran for the Massachusetts legislature. The statement is entitled "Col. Russell H. Conwell's Military Record" and is over the signatures of "W. H. Hodgkins (Major), C. F. King (Captain), and C. H. Taylor (Colonel, and private secretary to the Governor of Massachusetts)." It reads in part:

Inasmuch as certain interested parties have circulated false and malicious reports for the purpose of injuring Colonel Conwell's personal character, and to defeat his election to-day, we deem it our duty both to him and the voters of this district to state that we have carefully and impartially examined the public records, and find as follows:

. . . He was dismissed not dishonorably, and without loss of pay due, and before the promulgation of the order was promoted to Major in the 2nd North Carolina Union troops, and June 28th, 1864, was transferred to General McPherson's staff, with the rank of Lieut. Colonel (since brevetted).

A statement that he was wounded in the battle of Kenesaw Mountain is included.

However, Conwell's service record for his second enlistment, on file in the National Archives, ends with the statement that he was dismissed in accordance with a court-martial sentence on May 25, 1864. A check of the (Cont.)

Upon returning to Massachusetts, Conwell read law with Judge William S. Shurtleff, who had been colonel of Conwell's regiment during his first enlistment.⁴⁴ Then he went to the University of Albany, where he received an LL. B. degree upon examination.⁴⁵

⁴³ (Cont.) carded records of the 2nd North Carolina infantry and of the Union staff officers for 1864-1865 failed to reveal his name. In September 1910 the Washington law firm of Pennebaker, Carusi and Jones wrote the Adjutant General's office in behalf of Conwell requesting an honorable discharge on the grounds that the court-martial had been reversed. The reply of the Adjutant General, return no. 1697923, dated September 28, 1910, states:

The official records show that Russell H. Conwell was dismissed the services as captain of Battery D, 2d Massachusetts Heavy Artillery, pursuant to the sentence of a general court martial, which was never reversed nor set aside.

On March 29, 1869, the Governor of Massachusetts was advised by the War Department that the disability resulting from the dismissal of the officer was removed, but the so-called removal of disability was simply an announcement that the military authorities would not refuse to receive the officer into the military service of the United States again, provided the Governor of Massachusetts saw fit to recommission him, but did not affect in any way his previous dismissal nor the character of his discharge by sentence of the general court martial, nor entitle him to an honorable discharge.

⁴⁴ Burr, p. 133. The Record of the Massachusetts Volunteers confirms Shurtleff's colonelcy.

⁴⁵ Higgins, p. 133.

In 1865 Conwell married Jennie Hayden, his former pupil, and went into the Baptist church with her.⁴⁶ One week after the wedding an advertisement of Minnesota lured the young couple west. In Minneapolis Conwell opened a law office and was co-founder of the Daily Chronicle.⁴⁷ He was chairman of a committee which drafted the original constitution and by-laws for the Minneapolis Y.M.C.A. in 1866.⁴⁸ Physical disabilities due to his Civil War injuries led him to seek a geographic change, and he went to Germany as Immigration Agent for Minnesota.⁴⁹

After a year in Europe, he accepted a job as reporter on the Boston Traveller.⁵⁰ On the side he

⁴⁶ Smith, p. 80.

⁴⁷ This paper has since become the Minneapolis Tribune. There was a weekly edition known as Conwell's Star of the North.

⁴⁸ Samuel Wirt Wiley and Florence Lehmann, Builders of Men; a History of the Minneapolis Young Men's Christian Association: 1868-1936 (Minneapolis: F. O. Koehler, 1938) gives an account of Conwell's leadership.

⁴⁹ Letter of Conwell to Governor William R. Marshall, dated May 21, 1867, requests the appointment. The bottom and back of the letter have the governor's notation, dated May 28, 1867, that he gave Conwell the appointment. The letter is in the Minnesota Archives, St. Paul, Minnesota.

⁵⁰ Burr, p. 149.

opened a law office and began to lecture for Redpath.⁵¹ "Russell's Letters from the Battlefields," written on a southern tour for his paper, won him a measure of journalistic fame.⁵² During the next few years Conwell's editorial position for the Traveller, his free-lance writing for other papers and periodicals, and his lecturing necessitated much traveling in this country and abroad.⁵³ The work as a reporter gave Conwell insight into what was newsworthy, what would interest people. He learned to make vivid descriptions. His travels and the distinguished people he met or interviewed provided source material for his speeches. All the while he was gaining experience and some reputation as a speaker in America and abroad.

⁵¹ A Boston Lyceum Bureau printed form letter, dated August 20, 1870, "To Lecture Committees in New England and the Middle States," announces that Redpath and Fall will make engagements for "Col. Russell H. Conwell."

⁵² Five of these letters are printed in the appendix of Higgins, op. cit., with the footnote; "These letters are selected from the long series which Mr. Conwell wrote for the Traveller of Boston and are printed in this volume with his consent upon the expressed understanding that the volume is not to be published for general sale."

⁵³ Burr, pp. 151-158; Smith, pp. 94-106; on pp. 113-115 Smith quotes favorable comments on Conwell's speaking from the London Telegraph Critic, Times and News in 1870.

Conwell's wife died in January, 1872. Upon her death he resolved to give his lecture fees to poor students.⁵⁴ Anything that concerned the Bible and its figures now attracted him,⁵⁵ He had already begun collecting a theological library. Higgins writes:

When he began his theological studies, I do not know, but it was many years before he entered the ministry, for I remember being told by his father as early as 1867 that Russell was collecting a theological library, and sending to Germany for a number of books on the subject, which were delayed in the Boston Custom House.⁵⁶

Burr adds:

From all parts of the Old World he collected photographs of ancient manuscripts and sacred places, and kept up a correspondence with many professors and explorers who were interested in these subjects. He lectured in schools and colleges on archaeological subjects with illustrations prepared by himself. He also began lay preaching and spoke to sailors on the wharves, to idlers in the streets, and at little straggling missions where help was needed.⁵⁷

It was at one of these missions that Conwell met Sarah Sanborn, daughter of a wealthy Boston family. The two were married in 1874 and set up housekeeping in Newton Center, a suburb of Boston and seat of Newton

⁵⁴ Smith, p. 89.

⁵⁵ Burr, p. 167.

⁵⁶ P. 35.

⁵⁷ P. 167

Theological Seminary. Conwell met a number of the Seminary professors and took several theological courses there.⁵⁸

He commuted to his law office in Boston. Of these days he wrote:

I made it a practice to go to my law office at five o'clock in the morning to prepare the work for my clerks and arrange the roster for the day's practice. On my way back and forth from my home to the city, I learned to read Hebrew, Spanish, Italian, French and German. . . .⁵⁹

His law practice seems to have been a successful one. He was admitted to practice before the Supreme Court of the United States March 21, 1876;⁶⁰ however, a check of United States Reports⁶¹ fails to reveal any case in which he appeared. Smith states that between the time of his opening a law office in Minneapolis in 1865 and his ordination to the ministry in 1880, his income from legal practice reached the \$10,000 mark one year.⁶² A magazine interview between Bruce Barton and

⁵⁸ Higgins, p. 35.

⁵⁹ Burr, p. 56.

⁶⁰ Attorneys and Counsellors, roll of those admitted to practice before the Supreme Court, kept in the Supreme Court building, Washington, D. C.

⁶¹ U. S. 91 (October 1875) through U. S. 106 (October 1882) were checked.

⁶² p. 139.

Conwell brings out that the latter had over \$50,000 in cash as a result of his law practice when he entered the ministry.⁶³

Burr says that in addition to his newspaper work, lecturing and law practice, Conwell engaged in real estate operations in Somerville, a growing suburban section, and started the Somerville Journal.⁶⁴

He also found time to participate in religious and civic activities in Boston. He taught a Sunday School class of about 600 in Tremont Temple.⁶⁵ In 1875 Conwell "organized the first Young Men's Congress incorporated in Massachusetts, modeled after the National Congress with senators and representatives."⁶⁶ The Congress remained active long after its founder left Boston and was not disbanded until 1913-1914.⁶⁷

The effect of these years may be readily seen: he continued to gain practical speech experience on the platform and in court; he used his spare time to acquire new knowledge and skills; he lived the full, active life

⁶³ P. 14.

⁶⁴ P. 164.

⁶⁵ Lane, p. 5.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Burr, p. 164.

which he recommended to others.

Having accepted a call to the Lexington, Massachusetts, Baptist Church, Conwell was ordained to the ministry in 1880. After a short but effective stay there, he became pastor of Grace Baptist Church, Philadelphia, a position he filled until his death. When he went to Philadelphia, the church had a membership of less than three hundred, and an unfinished building with a mortgage of \$15,000.⁶⁸ Within ten years the congregation had become one of the largest in America; and a new church building, the Baptist Temple, seating 3,135 in the main auditorium, had been erected.⁶⁹ During his ministry he baptized almost ten thousand adults.⁷⁰ His effective pulpit oratory was probably a contributing factor to the growth of his work.

In 1884 a young man asked Dr. Conwell how he might obtain an education when he must work all day. The minister offered to teach the youth one evening a week. On the first class night seven men arrived for instruction; by the third evening there were forty.

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 186-187.

⁶⁹ Acres of Diamonds (Shackleton), pp. 92-93.

⁷⁰ Burr, p. 28.

Soon other volunteer teachers had to be found. A room was hired, then a house, then two houses. The school was chartered as Temple College, and permanent buildings were erected alongside the Baptist Temple.⁷¹ The college became a university in 1907. For many years Russell Conwell taught the college classes in oratory.⁷² He served as the institution's president the remainder of his life. During his presidency more than 100,000 students attended the school.⁷³

Under his leadership the people of Baptist Temple established the Samaritan and Greatheart Hospitals in Philadelphia. The Garretson Hospital, although not founded by the church, was purchased and its facilities were enlarged when Temple University took over the Philadelphia Dental College.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Acres of Diamonds (Shackleton), pp. 132-134.

⁷² The Temple Catalogues from 1893-1894, the earliest available, to 1920-1921 always include Conwell as a lecturer for some course. He generally taught in the schools of law or theology. Among the courses he offered are: Oratory, Sacred Oratory, Elocution, Homiletics, Public Platform Work, Mental Philosophy, Christian Ethics, and Professional Ethics.

⁷³ Beury, p. 633. (This was the inaugural address of Dr. Beury as he became Temple's second president.)

⁷⁴ Burr, pp. 290, 294-295.



Thus after entering the ministry Conwell continued to show a strong interest in the precept and practice of public speaking. He sought to fill the physical as well as the spiritual needs of his fellow-citizens. Temple University was founded when he tried to help others carry out his philosophy of self-improvement.

Speaking Career

Exactly when Russell Conwell began his professional lecturing career is a little difficult to determine. Burr considers his talks as a Redpath book salesman in 1860 "his first systematic course of public addresses."⁷⁵ With the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861 he became a popular recruiting speaker.⁷⁶ However, Burr does not consider either of these as platform lectures. She writes:

In 1860, when but seventeen years of age, young Conwell gave a lecture on the "Philosophy of History," in which he tried to show that the Civil War was inevitable because of the events of the past fifty years. But his first attempt at real platform lecturing was made in Westfield, Massachusetts, in 1861, in the Methodist Episcopal Church, when he was encouraged and introduced by the great temperance advocate, John B. Gough.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ P. 99.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 110; Higgins, p. 42; Smith, p. 59.

⁷⁷ P. 322.

Conwell himself gives two different dates for this Westfield lecture. Over a 1913 date he says:

The war and the public meetings for recruiting soldiers furnished an outlet for my suppressed sense of duty, and my first lecture was on the "Lessons of History" as applied to the campaigns against the Confederacy.

That matchless temperance orator and loving friend, John B. Gough, introduced me to the little audience in Westfield, Massachusetts, in 1862.⁷⁸

Four years later, as part of an illustration in "The Jolly Earthquake," Conwell states, "John B. Gough introduced me the first time I ever lectured, fifty-seven years ago the first of last September, to an audience in Westfield, Massachusetts."⁷⁹ Since this version of "The Jolly Earthquake" was published in 1917, "fifty-seven years ago the first of last September" could not possibly be later than 1860. Westfield records seem to indicate that 1862 is the correct date. A bronze plaque erected there in 1947 by the Western Hampden Historical Society reads, "Here Russell H. Conwell . . . delivered his first lecture, 1862. . . ."⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Acres of Diamonds (Shackleton), p. 175.

⁷⁹ The Jolly Earthquake, p. 49.

⁸⁰ The Springfield [Massachusetts] Union, October 28, 1947, p. 1.

Another "first" is recorded by Higgins, who recalls:

In 1863 or 1864 I think, when he re-enlisted after one term of service, he delivered his first lyceum lecture. . . . His lecture that evening was on some historical subject, bearing on the benefits of previous wars, and was delivered for the students of Mt. Holyoke Seminary in Hadley, Massachusetts.⁸¹

None of his biographers attempts to fix a date for his first sermon. Burr does make the statement that after Jennie Conwell's death in 1872 he began "lay preaching and spoke to sailors on the wharves, to idlers in the street, and at little straggling missions where help was needed."⁸²

Dr. Conwell's professional lecture repertory included many different titles through the years. In 1870 Redpath and Fall list "The Chinaman at Home" and "Chinese Civilization" as the subjects for which they are prepared to book Conwell.⁸³ The next year he spoke in Boston for at least two lecture courses on "Our Own

⁸¹ Pp. 43-44. The summer of 1863 is the time between enlistments.

⁸² P. 167.

⁸³ Boston Lyceum Bureau printed form letter, August 20, 1870.

Land."⁸⁴ In 1872 the Evening Traveller advertised that "Col. Russell H. Conwell's Great Lecture on Ireland and the United States is to be repeated in Warren Hall, Somerville On the evening of October 20th. . . ."⁸⁵ Writing in 1899, Smith gives the following list of subjects in the order which the lectures were prepared "as nearly as could be ascertained."

The Philosophy of History
 Men of the Mountains
 The Old and the New New England
 My Fallen Comrades
 The Dust of Our Battlefields
 Was It a Ghost Story?
 The Unfortunate Chinese
 Three Scenes in Babylon
 Three Scenes from the Mount of Olives
 Americans in Europe
 General Grant's Empire
 Princess Elizabeth
 Guides
 Success in Life
 Acres of Diamonds
 The Undiscovered
 The Silver Crown, or Born a King
 Heroism of a Private Life
 The Jolly Earthquake
 Heroes and Heroines
 Garibaldi, or the Power of Blind Faith
 The Angel's Lily

⁸⁴ The Boston Evening Traveller, October 4, 1871, announces the lecture as part of the course at Tremont Temple; the Traveller of October 9 carries information on the same lecture in the "Berkely Lectures" at the Berkeley Street Church.

⁸⁵ Ibid., October 17, 1872, p. 3.

The Life of Columbus
 The Seven Guardian Angels of Columbus
 Five Million Dollars for the Face of the Moon
 Henry Ward Beecher
 That Horrid Turk
 Cuba's Appeal to the United States
 Anita, the Feminine Torch⁸⁶

Burr gives the same list plus "The Curriculum on the Schools of the Prophets in Ancient Israel" and "Personal Glimpses of Celebrated Men and Women."⁸⁷ Elsewhere she cites "Heroes at Home"⁸⁸ and states that Conwell lectured "on archaeological subjects with illustrations prepared by himself."⁸⁹ "Artemus Ward" is another of his popular lectures.⁹⁰ "Looking Downward" and "A Queen" are two of the lectures he gave at Chautauqua, New York, in 1890.⁹¹ An early lecture listed by Higgins is "Lessons of Travel."⁹²

⁸⁶ Pp. 110-111.

⁸⁷ P. 319.

⁸⁸ P. 307.

⁸⁹ P. 167.

⁹⁰ Listed fifteen times in the memoranda books for 1908 and 1909.

⁹¹ "Chautauqua Program for 1890," The Chautauquan, XI (1890), 515.

⁹² P. 91. Conwell's son, Leon, wrote to Dr. Milton Stauffer of Temple University September 1, 1940, stating that "Acres of Diamonds" was first given under the title "Lessons of Travel." This letter is in the Temple Conwellana collection. However, in 1886 on successive days Conwell delivered "Lessons of Travel" and "Acres of Diamonds" at Chautauqua, New York. It seems unlikely that (Cont.)

All that is known about most of these lectures is their titles. There are complete texts for five of them -- "Acres of Diamonds," "Personal Glimpses of Celebrated Men and Women," "The Silver Crown, or Born a King," "The Angel's Lily," and "The Jolly Earthquake."⁹³ "Garibaldi" and "Artemus Ward" exist in outline form.⁹⁴

Of all Conwell's lectures, "Acres of Diamonds" was the most popular in his lifetime. It was reportedly delivered 6152 times.⁹⁵ A rough estimate of the relative popularity of his various lectures may be obtained from his memoranda books for 1900-1909.⁹⁶ Of the 169 times

⁹² (Cont.) the lectures were identical. (Chautauqua Program for 1886," The Chautauquan, VI [1885-1886], 606.)

⁹³ For the location of these lectures, see "Sources of Speech Texts," pp. 13 to 22, in the introductory chapter.

⁹⁴ Miss Jane Tuttle has these outlines in her collection of Conwellana.

⁹⁵ Maurice F. Tauber, Russell Herman Conwell, 1843-1925, a Bibliography (Philadelphia: Temple University, 1935), p. 6.

⁹⁶ These books, located in the Conwellana Collection, Sullivan Memorial Library, Temple University, are uniformly two and a half inches by five inches. The first, a "Dramatic Mirror Date Book," contains pages for the seasons 1900-1901 and 1901-1902; however, Conwell's entries do not begin until July 4, 1900. The other four are "Excelsior" diaries. One is for 1903, one for 1904, one for 1908, and the other for 1909. Conwell apparently did not use these books consistently, for there are gaps (Cont)

that he names the lecture to be delivered, "Acres of Diamonds" is indicated in one-third of the cases, or 56 times. "The Jolly Earthquake," the next most popular lecture, appears in 32 instances. "The Silver Crown" is next with 25 presentations; then come "Artemus Ward" with 15, "The Angel's Lily" with 12, "L. A."⁹⁷ with 11, "Personal Glimpses of Celebrated Men and Women" with 9, and "The Heroism of a Private Life" with 8 listings. "Elizabeth of France" is mentioned once. The accompanying table gives an analysis of the relative popularity of the lectures for the years that titles are listed.

⁹⁶ (Cont.) of several weeks in each book when no engagements are noted. In addition to lecture engagements, weddings, funerals, committee meetings and similar appointments are recorded. A total of 569 lecture engagements appear, and for 164 of these there is some indication of the speech selected. On five occasions, two lectures are named. Both are included, making a total of 169, in the popularity estimate.

⁹⁷ It seems probable that these initials indicate a lecture, but there is no clue as to what the name of it may be.

RELATIVE POPULARITY OF VARIOUS LECTURES, 1900-1909

Lecture	1900	1901	1902	1903	1908	1909	Total
Acres of Diamonds	2	17		8	11	18	56
The Jolly Earthquake	4	10		1	5	12	32
The Silver Crown	3	9		4	6	3	25
Artemus Ward					12	3	15
The Angel's Lily	2			1	4	5	12
"L. A."	5	2	1	3			11
Personal Glimpses				1	4	4	9
Heroism of a Private Life	3	3			2		8
Elizabeth of France	1						1
Total	20	41	1	18	44	45	169

During his career, Dr. Conwell had occasion to speak abroad as well as in this country. Smith writes of his journey around the world in 1870-1871:

It included a lecture trip in the Western Territories and California, thence to the Sandwich Island, through Japan, into the interior of China and to Peking, visiting Sumatra, Siam, Burmah, Madras, journeying to the Himalaya Mountains, through India, piercing Arabia to Mecca, going to the Upper Nile, and home by the way of Greece, Italy, and England.⁹⁸

Burr declares:

His later lecturing tours were confined to the United States; but in earlier years he spoke in England, Ireland, France, Germany, Italy, Turkey, Egypt, the Holy Land, India, China and Japan.⁹⁹

He lectured in the Shakespeare Theatre at Stratford-on-Avon; to Indians at one of the Indian schools in the West; to the deaf at an institute where the lecture as he gave it was repeated by the teacher in sign language to the audience.¹⁰⁰ Although the majority of his engagements were in small cities,¹⁰¹ there were times in the West when excursion trains were necessary to carry the people to his lectures.¹⁰² Among the unique places where the

⁹⁸ P. 104.

⁹⁹ P. 320.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 319.

¹⁰¹ Smith, p. 113

¹⁰² Duncan.

ever popular "Acres of Diamonds" was delivered are: the Taj Mahal, the enclosure at Jerusalem where Solomon's Temple once stood, the Garden of Gethsemane, and the English colony at Hong Kong.¹⁰³ "Men of the Mountains" reportedly was delivered by special request before the King and Queen of Norway at the palace in Stockholm.¹⁰⁴ Sermons as well as lectures were delivered abroad. For example, he preached on "The Peace of God" at Brexton Baptist Church, London, May 22, 1898.¹⁰⁵

As a general rule, Dr. Conwell arranged his speaking schedule in order that he might be present in his own pulpit for the Sunday services and the Wednesday prayer-meeting. Therefore, the majority of his engagements were in places easily accessible from Philadelphia: the New England states, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland and Delaware. Almost every day of the week he lectured somewhere. Next to the Philadelphia area he visited the Middle West¹⁰⁶ most frequently. The memoranda

¹⁰³ Burr, p. 318.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 318-319.

¹⁰⁵ The True Philadelphian, III, 119.

¹⁰⁶ States included in this designation are Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota.

books record thirty-one tours, lasting from four to eighteen days, for this area. In the same period there were eight trips to the South. His most extended southern tour was made February 3-13, 1903, when he visited Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Louisiana and South Carolina. In this period he made three visits to the West Coast -- one in November, 1902, the second in January and February, 1904, and the third for the same months in 1909. There is a full summer schedule available for 1915, when Conwell was seventy-one years old. From Thursday, June 24, through Sunday, August 29, he lectured every week-day and preached every Sunday in the town where he happened to be, with the exception of two days -- August 1 and 2 -- when he was "en route to next date on circuit."¹⁰⁷ In June he lectured or preached in Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin. July found him in Minnesota, South Dakota, Iowa, Nebraska and Kansas. During August he toured Pennsylvania, New York and New Jersey.

The letterhead of "August W. Grebe, Manager," announced "Russell H. Conwell's Farewell Tour, 1921-1922;" however, 1923 found him making an extended tour

¹⁰⁷ Acres of Diamonds (Shackleton), pp. 122-123.

to the West with his daughter, Mrs. Nima Conwell Tuttle.¹⁰⁸
 Between January 14 and January 19, he spoke in Chickasha, Oklahoma; Bakersfield, California; Roseburg and Portland, Oregon; Waterville, Colfax and Walla Walla, Washington; Nampa and Buhl, Idaho; and Logan and Brigham, Utah.

For more than a half century, then, Russell H. Conwell was a popular American preacher and lecturer. His most celebrated lecture was "Acres of Diamonds," with "The Jolly Earthquake," and "The Silver Crown" as runners-up. He made several trips abroad, in the course of which he lectured or preached to various European and Asiatic audiences. His later tours were largely confined to the United States. The bulk of his engagements was in New England, the Middle Atlantic states and the Middle West; but he did make a number trips to the South, the Southwest, and the Pacific coast.

Philosophy of Speech: Theory

Conwell revealed his personal philosophy of speech theory in what he taught, wrote and said. He apparently opened his class in oratory with a lecture on the nature of the subject. Delp's notes begin:

¹⁰⁸ Information about this tour is found on an uncatalogued slip of paper in the Conwellana Collection, Sullivan Memorial Library, Temple University.

Oratory is the science of effective speech! "Effective speech" is intended to produce something; if you wish to speak or write you wish to do so for a definite purpose, and that purpose should always be a good one.

The science of oratory is so to train us to utter our thoughts as to produce definite, decided, immediate results.¹⁰⁹

Apparently Conwell continued to emphasize the purposefulness of speech, for Delp's notes for October 19 declare: "Never write a book or article, never make a speech, without a definite object in view!" Conwell underscores the aim of arousing action with these words in one of his sermons: "The duty of an orator or of a Gospel messenger is not to tell you new things but to arouse you to action."¹¹⁰ In his Life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, he declares: "Oratory should always be decided by its effects, and the supreme pleasure of public speaking can only be truly enjoyed by him who succeeds."¹¹¹ The scope of oratory "should be the

¹⁰⁹ Lecture for October 5, 1889. The definition of oratory as "the science of effective speech" also appears in Burr, p. 328. Acres of Diamonds: Our Everyday Opportunities and Their Wondrous Riches, p. 388, changes the definition slightly to "the science of effective expression."

¹¹⁰ "True Peace," Temple Pulpit, II, 50. (Preached March 9, 1890.)

¹¹¹ P. 153.

great study of all mankind."¹¹²

Conwell considered the distinction between oratory and elocution an important one. His discussion of the need of orators in Observation: Every Man His Own University includes the following paragraph:

There is a wide difference between elocution and real oratory. Elocution is an art of expression, which every teacher has, and he teaches his own art. But oratory is the great science of successful speech. The man who gets what he pleads for is an orator, no matter how he calls. If you call a dog and he comes, that is oratory. If he runs away, that is elocution!¹¹³

In a later chapter on oratory he writes:

The schools of elocution so often seem to fail to recognize the wide gulf that exists between elocution and oratory. The former is an art which deals primarily with enunciation, pronunciation, and gesture; the work of the latter science is persuasive -- it has to do mainly with influencing the head and the heart.¹¹⁴

The Delp notes include a lecture on "The Uses of the voice"¹¹⁵ and another on "Gesture."¹¹⁶ These two form the unit on delivery in the course. The introduction to the former states:

¹¹² Acres of Diamonds: Our Everyday Opportunities and Their Wondrous Riches, p. 388.

¹¹³ P. 47.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 141.

¹¹⁵ Lecture for November 23, 1889.

¹¹⁶ Lecture for November 30, 1889.

Elocution is an art, and means leading toward an end. So, in elocution you will study the art of enunciation, of clearly and distinctly uttering your words, and expressing your vowels and consonants with decision. But in oratory we just step one grade higher than elocution and apply elocution; so understand that oratory is the application of elocution -- so far as it applies to our study tonight. . . .

Conwell also considered gesture a part of elocution.

One of his illustrations in "Acres of Diamonds" describes a speaker in the following terms:

He must have studied the subject much, for he assumed an elocutionary attitude; he rested heavily upon his left heel, slightly advanced the right foot, threw back his shoulders, opened the organs of speech, and advanced his right foot at an angle of forty-five.

As he stood in that elocutionary attitude this is just the way the speech went, this is it precisely. Some of my friends have asked me if I do not exaggerate it, but I could not exaggerate it. Impossible!¹¹⁷

Some of Conwell's ideas on the differentiation of oratory and elocution may have come from Caldwell's A Practical Manual of Elocution. This book was used as a text during the days Conwell was at Wilbraham. In the "Introduction" Caldwell states:

Eloquence, or even oratory, does not however consist wholly in a good elocution. Elocution concerns only the external part of oratory, and may

¹¹⁷ Case and Case, p. 270. The same description appears in all the full versions of "Acres of Diamonds."

be considered both as a science and as an art. As a science, it teaches the principles from which are deduced rules for the effective delivery of what is eloquent in thought and language; as an art, it is the actual embodying in delivery of every accomplishment, whether of voice or of gesture, by which oratorical excitement is superadded to the eloquence of thought and language.¹¹⁸

In a later chapter he adds:

Great excellence in oratory must doubtless have as a basis a well-balanced mind. . . . The possession . . . must be accompanied with judicious and various exercise If to these natural powers, thus trained, we add a knowledge of human nature, a command of language, a sound body and a good moral character, little can be wanting -- but the power of mechanical execution.¹¹⁹

This "power of mechanical execution" is what elocution teaches.

In his baccalaureate sermon for the graduates of the Meff College of Oratory, Dr. Conwell said there was no "nobler ambition" than the desire to serve one's fellowmen, teaching them by word of mouth.¹²⁰ In his later years, he mused on the days of Henry Ward Beecher, Wendell Phillips, George William Curtis, Edward Everett and John B. Gough. "They are all gone," he wrote, "and

¹¹⁸ P. 18.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 97-98.

¹²⁰ "Words Alive," The Temple Magazine, V, 267-269. (Preached in 1893.)

no successors have appeared. Liberty and oratory have ever gone together, and always will, hence the need of oratory is especially pressing now."¹²¹ He felt that government greatly needed outstanding speakers.¹²² Delp records that he suggested the teaching of speech as a profession to his class:

The tutor spoke of the present and rapidly increasing demand for teachers of Oratory, and hoped to be able in the future to recommend some members of his class for that purpose, as it would prove to be a very remunerative employment, it being a comparatively new study in America, and there being so few persons qualified to teach it.¹²³

Dr. Conwell felt that a requisite for greatness in public address was that the speaker have a philanthropic spirit. He expressed this idea in the following words:

. . . the orator must have a sincere and excited interest in some measure intended for the good of mankind or the welfare of some individual. The feeling involved in such a genuine philanthropy is deeper than art. There can be no true eloquence without it, and in times of special emergencies it overrides all art and hides all defects. The orator of the future, like all in the past, must love mankind and be unquenchably in earnest. He must at times sink himself entirely in his theme and surrender all his emotions to the sublime spirit of self-sacrifice.¹²⁴ No petty, selfish, or mean spirit can be eloquent.

¹²¹ Observation: Every Man His Own University, p. 45.

¹²² Ibid., p. 144.

¹²³ Lecture for October 5, 1889.

¹²⁴ Acres of Diamonds: Our Everyday Opportunities and Their Wondrous Riches, pp. 395-396.

In one of his sermons portraying Christ as "The Greatest Orator," Conwell listed four characteristics which made Christ pre-eminent: (1) his bearing and personal appearance carried power; (2) he had great sympathy for mankind; (3) he loved God; and (4) he spoke of heaven and heavenly things.¹²⁵ "Words Alive"¹²⁶ advises that eloquence comes when one speaks from experience on topics "that reach the heart." "Paul, the Orator" puts the matter this way:

There are before me to-night perhaps a thousand young men, who are ambitious to be orators . . . and permit me to say to them . . . that no man can be eloquent, no man can expect to write his name among the famous orators of the world by a mere education, or mere cultivation, or mere physical power; by a voice ever so smooth, by a knowledge of English ever so intricate. But that success in public speech depends far more upon the man's soul interest in his topic than upon any training, though training is advantageous.¹²⁷

The interaction of speaker and audience was a matter to which Conwell gave considerable attention. Burr quotes his saying:

The great power of an audience over the speaker is seldom appreciated by the listener, and it seems

¹²⁵ The Temple Magazine, Vol. III, No. 4, pp. 1-13. (Preached May 23, 1891.)

¹²⁶ Op. Cit.

¹²⁷ The Temple Magazine, VI, 159-161. (Preached March 11, 1894.)

impossible to make an audience understand how dependent their teacher or preacher is upon their approval or applause. I have often addressed an audience where there was absolute quietness and demonstration of delight, and have felt the awful strain of being obliged to mentally or mesmerically lift that whole audience by an exercise of psychological strength; and when I retired from the platform I was too weak to walk alone

Yet such audiences are very often composed of the most attentive and retentive people, and I have often afterward heard that such a speech was of greater use than many others which I had enjoyed.¹²⁸

On another occasion Conwell said that a "good audience" could make him forget his rheumatism even when the attack was so severe that he had to use crutches to mount the platform.¹²⁹ In the last years of his life he wrote:

The audience also has a great influence, which might be best described as mesmeric, upon the speaker's mind. Thus, if a blunder is made on the public platform or a word distasteful to the audience is used, the speaker knows it, or more accurately, I might say, that he feels it, long before there is any indication of the sentiment of the audience upon their faces.¹³⁰

Conwell thought it was possible to use this force between speaker and audience. In Observation: Every Man His Own University he declares:

¹²⁸ Pp. 336-337.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 327.

¹³⁰ "Now My Idea Is This!" February 15, 1924.

There is a mystery about public speaking. . . . Some have imperfectly called this power "personal magnetism." While this is mainly born with men and women . . . yet it can be cultivated to a surprising degree The powerful speaker is consciously or unconsciously observant at all times of his audience, and he naturally adopts the tones, the gesture, and the language which attract the most attention and leave the most potent influence upon the audience.¹³¹

He taught his classes that a study of the audience was essential for successful speaking. Four of his sixteen lectures were on "Human Nature,"¹³² and another on "Selection of Theme or Purpose on which to speak"¹³³ stressed choosing a theme appropriate to the audience and discussed the way a "favorable audience helps speaker to greater heights."

In his analyses of what made other speakers effective, Conwell considered the speaker-audience relationship. He heard Lincoln's Cooper Union address and wrote of it:

All manner of theories were advanced by those who heard the speech to account for the gigantic mystery of eloquent power which he exhibited. One said it was mesmerism; another that it was magnetism; while the superstitious said there was "a distinct halo about his head" at one place in the speech. No analysis of the speech as he wrote it, nor any recollection of the words, shows anything remarkable in language, figures or ideas. The subtle,

¹³¹ Pp. 141-142.

¹³² Delp notes; lectures on October 19, October 26, November 2 and November 9.

¹³³ Ibid., lecture on December 7.

magnetic, spiritual force which emanated from that inspired speaker revealed to his audience an altogether different man from the one who began to read a different speech.¹³⁴

Conwell's discussion of Spurgeon states:

I sat under Spurgeon's preaching often in London when I was a correspondent. It would move me greatly. But afterward I would read it and feel that the address was very weak. The difference was so great it seemed impossible that the printed page could come from the same man. He had that telepathic, or mesmeric power, so that when he pronounced a word, a sort of spiritual communication between him and his audience was sent through their hearts and through their lives. The impress of his life and spirit was mighty, although it carried, perhaps little of educational intelligence.¹³⁵

His theory of organization was essentially an adaptation of the classical plan of Aristotle¹³⁶ or Cicero.¹³⁷ The chapter on oratory in Observation:

Every Man His Own University says:

Where the orator has not been misdirected or misled by some superficial teacher of elocution, his aim will be first "to win the favorable attention of his audience" and then to strongly

¹³⁴ Why Lincoln Laughed, p. 21.

¹³⁵ "The Secret Door to the Heart," The Temple Pulpit, Vol. I, No. 25. (Preached March 29, 1925.)

¹³⁶ Proem, statement, argument and epilogue. Rhetoric Book III, Chapter 13.

¹³⁷ Exordium, narration, proof and peroration. De Oratore, Book II, Chapters 76-81.

impress them with his opening sentence, his appearance, his manners, and his subject. His reputation will have also very much to do with winning this favorable impression at first

The second condition of a successful oration is the statement of the important facts or truths Facts and truths are the most important things in all kinds of oratory; as they are the most difficult to handle, the audience is more likely to listen to them at the opening of the talk, and they must be placed before the hearers clearly and emphatically, before the speaker enters upon the next division of his address.

The third condition of a successful address is the argument, or reasoning which is used to prove the conclusion he wishes his hearers to reach. It is here that logic has its special place; . . . After he has thus reasoned, the natural orator makes his appeal, which is the chief purpose of all true oratory. It is here where the orator becomes vehement, here where he shows all the ornament of his talk in appropriate figures of speech.¹³⁸

The same divisions appear in Acres of Diamonds: Our Everyday Opportunities and Their Wondrous Riches. There he summarizes with the sentence, "To call for attention, to tell some facts, to reason from those facts, and to urge the listener to do something about it which we wish done, is the plan of nearly all great speeches."¹³⁹ The same four steps are presented in the Delp notes as a

¹³⁸ Pp. 142-144.

¹³⁹ Pp. 394-395.

part of the lecture on "Extemporaneous Speech."¹⁴⁰

Illustrations are the only kind of supporting material which Dr. Conwell ever discussed in much detail. According to him, "The best method for teaching is by illustrations."¹⁴¹ He devoted three of his sixteen class periods to the topic,¹⁴² and insisted that "the use of illustration is the most important study in the cultivation of oratory."¹⁴³ He considered the "facts of history" the best source of examples.¹⁴⁴

Dr. Conwell was frequently asked about the method of becoming a successful orator. He answered one questioner:

Of course, if you had a great name or had performed some world-famous exploit, you would begin on a more favorable and profitable basis. But as you don't have such an advantage, I

¹⁴⁰ Lecture for January 11, 1890.

¹⁴¹ Acres of Diamonds: Our Everyday Opportunities and Their Wondrous Riches, p. 230.

¹⁴² "Use of Illustration," a general introduction to the topic, December 14, 1889; "The Power of Illustration," the use of language and example for disparagement, December 26, 1889; and "The Power of Illustration," the use of language and example for elevation.

¹⁴³ Lecture for December 14, 1889.

¹⁴⁴ "Extemporaneous Speech," lecture for January 11, 1890.

can only suggest that you go ahead with patience, depending wholly on the merit and attractiveness of the subject-matter and manner of your lectures.¹⁴⁵

In one of his books he wrote:

It is foolhardy for anyone to presume to speak with no preparation, for those who wish to give themselves to oratory should carefully study the great debaters, learn how they expressed themselves, and then accumulate important truths and facts concerning their subject. But we must not forget that too much study as to nicety of expression may lose something of the mountainous effects of what we wish to state. . . .

If you desire to become a platform orator, read the lives of successful orators, and apply yourself to the means which helped them to distinction. But be vigilant not to lose your own individuality, and never strive to be any one but yourself. In no place more than upon the platform does sham mean shame; nothing is more transparent.¹⁴⁶

His course in oratory included one lecture, "The Use of Other People's Ideas,"¹⁴⁷ which contained some suggestions on gathering material. Having selected his subject, the prospective speaker was advised to go to the library for the encyclopedia or other references. There was also a suggestion that he keep a "file or list" of usable

¹⁴⁵ Letter of Russell H. Conwell to Rev. C. F. Sherr, May 17, 1901, quoted in "Note to the Reader," The Jelly Earthquake, no page number.

¹⁴⁶ Observation: Every Man His Own University, pp. 146, 148.

¹⁴⁷ Lecture on January 18, 1890. Plagiarism was also discussed.

quotations.

In his class Conwell spent two evenings on delivery. In considering "The Uses of the Voice,"¹⁴⁸ he suggested the use of mimicry in cases in which it was appropriate; and he pointed out that emotion was expressed through tone. Delp's last statement is, "To sum up the study of the evening rested upon this advice: Be natural!" The lecture on "Gesture"¹⁴⁹ recommends the study of pantomime and of facial expressions. Delp concludes, "Do not hope to be orators in the highest sense unless your whole body acts!"

Some of Conwell's ideas on delivery may have come from Caldwell's A Practical Manual of Elocution. In his "Introduction" Caldwell emphasizes naturalness with these words:

The following system of instruction, both as regards voice and gesture, consists of principles rather than of specific rules; and of principles believed to be drawn from nature, and which, when applied even fully to practice, will leave the learner sufficiently in possession of all his natural peculiarities. Their entire object is to refine and perfect nature; not to pervert it. The greatest orators, even the most popular players, are those who have made art subservient to the development of their own native powers; and who at least seem to have been formed

¹⁴⁸ Lecture on November 23, 1889.

¹⁴⁹ Lecture on November 30, 1889.

on no model. Here, as elsewhere, art is supposed to be but the handmaid of nature.¹⁵⁰

Although Caldwell does not specifically recommend mimicry, his treatment of training the voice to express various emotions and shades of meaning borders on mimicry.¹⁵¹ Facial expression, especially the eyes, is included as an element of gesture.¹⁵² There is no reference to pantomime. Caldwell recognizes that gesture is a matter for the whole body. In speaking of gestures of the hand he says:

The movements of the lower limbs, of the body, and of the head must all join in harmony with the principal gesture of the hand; otherwise the movement will be but a mere imitation of nature.¹⁵³

Although Conwell mentions only the extemporaneous speech in his lectures,¹⁵⁴ he apparently approved of the reading of speeches. After describing Conwell's unfortunate experience with a memorized speech at Wilbraham, Burr quotes him:

¹⁵⁰ P. 22. See also pp. 221, 257.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 81-85, 113-115, 126-168.

¹⁵² Ibid., pp. 236-241.

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 265.

¹⁵⁴ "Extemporaneous Speech," lecture on January 11, 1890.

Hence, in my life's work, I have never written a lecture or a sermon and have dictated my books . . . I must decidedly approve of writing out addresses and sermons and have listened to many a reader with deep fascination. But, for myself, I have been unable to accomplish anything further, or more polished, than in doing my best in what is called extemporaneous speech.¹⁵⁵

Additional insight into Conwell's theory of speech may be gained by examining the topics of his lectures on oratory as presented in the Delp notes. The sequence of lessons is:

October 5, 1889 - an introduction to the course, consisting chiefly of a definition of oratory and the possibilities in the field; no title is given.

October 12, 1889 - a discussion of description in oratory; not titled.

October 19, 1889 - "Human Nature: I"; a discussion of the motive appeal of love.

October 26, 1889 - "Human Nature: II"; a discussion of "hate or indignation against wrong" and how to arouse emotion.

November 2 and 9, 1889 - "Human Nature: III"; a discussion of fear, especially fear of conscience and fear of death.

November 16, 1889 - a discussion of an exercise assigned the previous week.

November 23, 1889 - "The Uses of the Voice"

November 30, 1889 - "Gesture"

December 7, 1889 - "Selection of Theme or Purpose on which to speak"

December 14, 1889 - "Use of Illustration"

December 28, 1889 - "The Power of Illustration"

January 4, 1890 - "The Power of Illustration"
(Cont'd.)

January 11, 1890 - "Extemporaneous Speech"; a discussion of stage-fright, mesmerism, and the sensitiveness of great orators plus a discussion of organization.

January 18, 1890 - "The Use of Other People's Ideas"; a discussion of quotation, plagiarism, the use of the library, files of usable materials, and a listing of the "best" poets and authors.

January 25, 1890 - a preview of work for the next term, which will include practice debates and open discussion; students will also learn the elements of criticism.

Although there may have been more, Delp refers to only two class exercises. The first, called a problem, is: "If a politician wants votes, how can he appeal to a father's love for his child in such a way as to secure the vote of the father at the approaching election?"¹⁵⁶ The second was an assignment made November 9 and discussed the following week:

Prepare illustration showing how in oratory one or more of three influences may be brought to bear to affect the actions of men and women. Take any subject. At top of page state what you wish to accomplish, then how you would accomplish it by giving some illustration.

The final examination consisted of ten questions:

1. What is oratory?
2. What three chief emotions move mankind to immediate action?

¹⁵⁶ Lecture on October 19, 1889.

3. Give the general divisions of extemporaneous address.
4. What is the value of illustrations?
5. What is the best source of illustrations?
6. What peculiarity is noticeable in the best orators?
7. Illustrate your idea of an oration on temperance. Give only heads of each division.
8. Give an example of illustrating downward.
9. Give an example of illustrating upward.
10. What is the best test of real orators?
[The answer to this question is their power for good.]

Conwell defined oratory as "the science of effective speech." It should have a definite end in view and should move the audience to action. He differentiated oratory and elocution, limiting the latter to the study of voice and gesture. Caldwell may have influenced his thinking on elocution. To be great, an orator must be concerned with serving humanity. Conwell recognized the interaction of speaker and audience, but never defined it definitely. His four-point theory of speech organization was patterned on the classic. Illustrations were the form of supporting material which he emphasized. For those who aspired to become orators he advised the study of famous debaters, the use of the library, and the keeping of a file of materials. Perhaps

influenced by Caldwell again, he recommended a "natural" delivery. Some idea of his theory of speech may be gained from Delp's notes on his lectures, which stress analysis of human nature and the use of illustration. He does not seem to have used class exercises to any great extent in his teaching.

General Study Habits and Delivery

This section considers two broad aspects of Conwell's speech practice: his general habits of study and preparation, and his delivery. Other matters pertaining to his practice -- content, organization, and style, for example -- are reserved for chapters three and four.

How a man prepared his speeches is a difficult process to study. Few persons describe their thought processes. While they may tell where they found certain material, they do not tell how they happened to find it. Rough drafts and preliminary notes are frequently discarded once the desired speech form is obtained. There are, however, certain known features of Conwell's general study habits which must have influenced his speech preparation.

Early in life he formed the habit of carrying a book in his pocket and making use of any spare moments to

read or study.¹⁵⁷ Conwell attributed this habit to the influence of William Cullen Bryant and Elihu Burritt.

He stated:

I have never forgotten the advice he [Bryant] gave me one day, . . . for when I told him I was not able to earn sufficient money to go away to school, he told me that many of the greatest men in America had not been able to go to school at all, but had learned to study at home, and had used their spare hours with books which they carried about in their pockets. After that, for more than thirty years I carried various books and learned seven different languages, using the hours of travel, or when waiting at stations, in reading and careful study. . . . By far the greatest part of my useful education was obtained in such circumstances.¹⁵⁸

He described Burritt's influence in the following words:

Elihu Burritt, the learned blacksmith, was one of the inspirations of my younger days. . . . His example influenced many boys of New England to improve their spare time in the reading of valuable books or studying some language or history or science¹⁵⁹

Among the subjects he reputedly studied in this manner are: military tactics while he was still a school-boy,¹⁶⁰ law during his army career;¹⁶¹ and Hebrew, Spanish, Italian, French, German, mathematics and science when he commuted

¹⁵⁷ Smith, p. 46.

¹⁵⁸ Burr, pp. 54-55.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 56.

¹⁶⁰ Higgins, p. 56.

¹⁶¹ Smith, p. 227.

between his home and Boston law office.¹⁶²

The variety of his reading should be noted. He studied languages, science, theology and law. He enjoyed poetry. In his library "a large bookcase is given entirely to poems, and the old favorites are prominent -- Alice and Phoebe Cary, Whittier, Milton, Lowell, Dante, Tennyson and such writers. The only modern one is Noyes."¹⁶³ Among his books, biographies and books of a biographical nature were perhaps most numerous; there were also in abundance the "Lives and Letters" of various famous men and women.¹⁶⁴ He was interested in history -- American history, European history, world history. Books on the habits and customs of people in various parts of the world were favorites. Among the books in that part of his library now at Temple University are Doolittle's Social Life of the Chinese; Mayers' Treaty Ports of China and Japan; Hearne's Japan, An Interpretation; Behind the Veil in Persia and Turkish Arabia; Hawaii, Our New Possession; and numerous works

¹⁶² Burr, p. 56, gives the languages; and Smith, p. 227, lists mathematics and science.

¹⁶³ Burr, p. 345.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

on Palestine. He studied church history and the various religions of the world. In his library were the Koran, the works of Mary Baker Eddy, books on the Greek and Eastern churches, the creed of Presbyterians and others, a history of American Methodists and many volumes on Baptist history and doctrine. There were also books on psychology, economics, medicine and sociology. Fiction was noticeable by its absence.¹⁶⁵

Conwell also studied the speech models of the past and of his contemporaries. He mentions this study in Why Lincoln Laughed:

I had previously read and studied the great models of eloquence, and was then in New York, using my carefully hoarded pennies to hear Henry Ward Beecher, Doctor R. S. Stone, Doctor Storrs, Doctor Bellows, Archbishop McCloskey, and other orators of current fame. I had studied much for the purpose of teaching my classes, from the great models, from Cicero to Daniel Webster, and I had found my ideal in Edward Everett.¹⁶⁶

As a newspaperman he had the responsibility of reporting the sermons of Henry Ward Beecher¹⁶⁷ and Charles Haddon Spurgeon.¹⁶⁸ Another evidence of his attention to

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ p. 12.

¹⁶⁷ The typescript, "Personal Glimpses of Celebrated Men and Women," p. 15.

¹⁶⁸ "The Secret Door to the Heart," p. 8.

lecturers is in books, which frequently cite speakers. All three of his Presidential campaign biographies contain extensive quotations from speeches made by their respective candidates. Another example is Acres of Diamonds: Our Everyday Opportunities and Their Wondrous Riches. Among the many speeches quoted therein are: an address by a "lawyer of Baltimore" to Peabody Institute in 1872;¹⁶⁹ eight paragraphs of advice from a "saying" of George B. Loring, at one time United States Commissioner of Agriculture;¹⁷⁰ a talk by Judge William H. Ashman to students of the Philadelphia Law Academy in 1889;¹⁷¹ and a lecture on music by Professor Nobeling at the University of Leipsic.¹⁷²

Dr. Conwell believed in contacting prominent people directly to obtain particular information. Smith states that from the time he was a child he formed the habit of writing prominent men to ask them anything he wanted to know.¹⁷³ This custom continued in later life

¹⁶⁹ P. 91.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 124 et seq.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 189-191.

¹⁷² Ibid., p. 375.

¹⁷³ P. 47.

as may be seen from some of Conwell's writings. In a magazine article he says, "I went through the United States Senate in 1867 and asked each of the members how he got his early education."¹⁷⁴ In preparation for the chapter, "Fortune in Trade," in The New Day or, Fresh Opportunities, Conwell states that he interviewed Marshall Field of Chicago, John Wanamaker of Philadelphia, W. E. Dodge of New York, and T. C. Jordan of Boston.¹⁷⁵ One section of "The Jolly Earthquake" is based on a Tribune assignment to find out what various prominent people considered humorous.¹⁷⁶ Among the persons with whom he talked for this purpose were: Henry Ward Beecher; Charles Sumner; "Mrs. Whitney, the author" of Boston; Ralph Waldo Emerson; "Senator Wilson"; "Alexander Stevenson, of Georgia" [Alexander H. Stephens?]; and Harriet Beecher Stowe.

There is some evidence that Conwell was methodical in recording incidents, stories, or other material which he wished to remember. In the Angel's Lily he states that when he first heard that legend he "took it down in shorthand" in his diary.¹⁷⁷ He wrote the story

¹⁷⁴ "What You Can Do with Your Will Power," p. 100.

¹⁷⁵ P. 56.

¹⁷⁶ The Jolly Earthquake, pp. 43-47.

¹⁷⁷ P. 7.

of the silver crown "in the 'hen tracks' of shorthand which are now difficult to decipher."¹⁷⁸ Temple University owns a scrapbook compiled by Conwell about 1876.¹⁷⁹ The book contains clippings and notes which he used in preparing his book on the St. John fire and his campaign biography of Rutherford B. Hayes. Material on William A. Wheeler, vice-presidential candidate, is also included. There is a list of questions, which Conwell apparently planned to use when he interviewed the two men. The list is quite inclusive, with questions ranging from "Does he love music?" to "Was he ever captured?" It seems probable that Conwell employed similar scrapbooks in preparing his other books; however, this is the only one known.

Conwell reputedly had a photographic memory, which, of course, would have been of inestimable value to him as a general study tool. Higgins states, "He early acquired a most wonderful power of memorizing which strangely enabled him to look at pages and afterwards study them before his mind's eye without the book."¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁸ Observation: Every Man His Own University, p. 2.

¹⁷⁹ Conwellana Collection, Sullivan Memorial Library.

¹⁸⁰ P. 16.

Smith attributes Conwell's visual memory to the training of a Miss Parsons¹⁸¹ while Burr states that Miss Salina Cole gave him visual memory training.¹⁸² Only one statement by Conwell himself relative to his memory has been found. His comment provides evidence that his memory was a most unusual one -- but not necessarily photographic. He says:

Many times I have found a list of dates, figures, names and events in my addresses, which I was sure could not be correct, because I did not remember ever having read anything about those things, and felt that I had made a dreadful blunder in making such wild statements. But, afterwards, upon careful examination, I found that every statement was fully correct. Indeed, the most correct quotations that I ever use are those which come to me in the midst of the excitement of public speaking. Poems and speeches, events of history and recent incidents which have passed from my ordinary memory, leap back into view in the midst of my speech and I state them without hesitation; but I could not possibly recall or recite them in the calm hours of ordinary life.¹⁸³

After his experience with a written speech at Wilbraham, Conwell apparently never wrote out a sermon or lecture.¹⁸⁴ There are no known speech manuscripts in Dr. Conwell's own handwriting. However, there are

¹⁸¹ P. 44.

¹⁸² P. 75.

¹⁸³ Ibid., pp. 335-336.

¹⁸⁴ Burr, p. 98. Smith, p. 112, and Higgins, pp. 46-47, also state that he never wrote out a sermon or a lecture. So does the "Introduction" to Gleams of Grace (no page number).

numerous sermon outlines and a few speech outlines which he made. Miss Tuttle's collection has such notes written in pencil or in ink on almost any imaginable scrap of paper: envelopes, old correspondence, cards, church stationery, journals, account books, lined and unlined paper, and legal letterheads. There are also several in the church historical collection of Baptist Temple.

Facsimiles of two sermon outlines are printed in "Personal Glimpses of Russell H. Conwell."¹⁸⁵ These outlines were invariably topical outlines. Divisions and sub-divisions were usually marked by indentations rather than by letters, or Arabic or Roman numerals. Below is a sermon outline, which, however, does use Roman numerals to mark the major divisions. The transcription of the longhand copy to typing removes some of the interest value from the notes; but all details of spelling, spatial arrangement, and underscoring are reproduced with fidelity to the original.

May 20 James 111

Matt 18 - 37

Value of Words.

God's gift to man:

Story of Prometheus:

Speech the best gift

No words no reason

185 Pp. 9 and 12.

The speechless dog,
" " cat

I

The Saviors appreciation of the
value of words.

He indicates their power.
To encourage.

Fulton. Vanderbilt.
Stevenson. Stewart. Girard.
Milton to Waldenses.
Longfellow: "I go to prepare a Place"
"ar cries. "NaramE"
"Virginia." "Ellsworth:
"Andersonville."

II

In soothing:
"Lullaby." The wreck.
Garfield. The Savior calms to peace the sea
one word

III

In cursing. Old Testament.
Orphan's curse. The Wandering
Jew. Ruined Woman's
curse. Slander Othello's Iago.

IV

Alarming Fire! The flood,
"The foe. They come they come"

V

In persuasion Demosthenes
in the market place!
Peter the Hermit: Mirebeau
"Go slave tell your master that we are here
by the will of the people and that we will depart
only at the point of the bayonet!"

VI

To command.
word of Kings. Nicolas of Russia's
word. Seward.
"Charge"

V

Unspoken words. Power not used
"Ye said it not unto the least of these.
No Pardon.

VI

Sinful waste of words. Scholding:

Go with good words! Christ's words¹⁸⁶

A photograph, actual size, of one of Conwell's sermon outlines is on the next page.

A portion of the outline used the last time he delivered "Acres of Diamonds" illustrates his common practice of indicating divisions by indentations:

Diamonds
Gold
Oil
Silver
Picture
Merchants Bracelett
Manufacturers
Farmers
Maples
Eating Fish
Clothing Grapes
Cooking
Electricity
Discoveries
Columbus
Galileo
fewer Bunyan
Sewing machine Watt
mowing machine Stevenson
Telephone
Greatness Old Prob
Fame
"Knows nothing of its greatest men"
History unfair.
Clitus Nelson Napoleon Demosthenes¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶ This outline comes from a book of sermon outlines for successive Sundays, 1880-1883, in Miss Tuttle's collection. The cover of the book has stamped on it "Office of Russell H. Conwell." This sermon was probably preached in 1883.

¹⁸⁷ This outline appears on a sheet of paper, 5-1/2 inches by 8 inches. Most of the notes are in brown ink; however, a few are in pencil. All of the pencil notes and one or two lines written around the margin in ink are (Cont.)

Isiah 2-4I

God's way to make lessons of war the
precepts of peace. School of war

Lessons of Courage

Comfort ^{True} friendship. Hate
True womanhood

^{Dying}
Perpetuate these lessons.

II.

God's way to find a use for every
thing that has become useless.

Nature. History. Old Ruins. ~~For~~

III

Text say "They". man's way should
be like God's way.

Business. In farming, grafts.

waste land. Housekeeping. ^{lost} leg

In religious world. Missionaries.

Sahara in soul.

Is our life useless? Turn to account

Old habits. Turn ridicule. Boys

widow. Retired. God can show you a use

There is some question whether he ever referred to any of these notes in his speaking. The notebook of sermon outlines for 1880-1883 would be very awkward to manage in the pulpit and may have been used simply to record what he said after the sermon was over. This was certainly the case in some instances. For example, the only entry in April 1881 is, "Preached 4 Sermons on the Life of St. John." For November 4, 1883, he records:

About the universal sin of ingratitude. But not worth writing out. A dead, dead failure as a sermon. The Lord help me to do better next Sunday.

Smith writes of his use of notes:

He uses no notes, and gives his lectures no thought whatever during the day. In many instances he goes on the platform not knowing what his subject is to be until he hears the chairman announce it in the introduction. If his lecture is new he occasionally has a piece of paper before him with a skeleton outline, or if it is a subject he has not handled for many months or years he looks at his notes and thinks intently for a few minutes. During those brief moments of absorbed thought, the whole lecture reappears before his mind's eye, and is so vivid as to make its delivery a supreme delight¹⁸⁸

The "Foreword" to Fields of Glory says of his sermon preparation:

¹⁸⁷ (Cont.) omitted from this typescript. The original is in the Conwellana Collection, Temple University.

¹⁸⁸ P. 112.

One might say that Dr. Conwell does not prepare his sermons in the usual sense of the word. . . . He rarely makes an exhaustive "book" study of his subject. He may consult a few references as to dates or names or other statistical data. But the subject of the sermon and the incidents for illustrating it are largely drawn from his everyday work.

. . . So as he goes about his church, university and hospital work . . . his themes for his sermons come to him and rarely, by Saturday night or Sunday morning, has he failed to get a thought for his Sunday's talks

He sometimes takes with him into his pulpit, a card or scrap of paper upon which are jotted down names or other data to be used as reminders . . . His sermons are taken by a stenographer as they are delivered . . . In a few instances, when it was necessary to have the sermon in print simultaneously with its delivery, Dr. Conwell endeavoured to dictate in advance what he thought he would say. But it must be confessed, he seldom followed the outline given.¹⁸⁹

One feature of his preparation, at least for "Acres of Diamonds," was a survey of the community in which the talk was to be delivered. According to the Quay typescript, Conwell described this sort of preparation when he gave the lecture for the five thousandth time in the following language:

I would go to a town or city, and try to arrive there early enough to see the postmaster, the barber, the keeper of the hotel, the principal of the schools and the ministers of some of the churches, and then go into some of the factories and stores, and talk with the people, and get into sympathy with the local conditions of that town or city and see what had been their history, what opportunities they had, and what they had failed to do, . . . and then go in and talk to those people about the subjects which applied

to their locality.

In a newspaper article Dr. Conwell pointed out that he also did preliminary and specific reading before giving the lecture. He states:

For many years it has been my habit before giving this address to make a somewhat careful study of the actual conditions of the place in which it is to be given. I first make careful inquiries or do considerable reading about the town or city and find out all that I can as to the people of that place, their varying nationalities, their occupations, et cetera190

As a general habit of study and preparation, Conwell used his spare moments to read in a variety of fields. He studied model speeches of the past and of his contemporaries. When he desired specific information, he wrote to those whom he thought could supply it, and seems to have been methodical in recording what he thought he might use. His memory was well-developed and was a positive asset as a general study tool. Many topical outlines of his sermons and speeches are extant; however, there is some question as to whether he actually used these notes in the course of a talk. For one of his lectures at least, he made a definite attempt at audience analysis before delivering it in a new town.

A major factor in Conwell's success as a speaker may well have been his delivery. The Cases write:

190 "Now My Idea Is This!" February 15, 1924.

At his prime on the Lyceum and Chautauqua circuits, he was of ponderous physique, with stooped shoulders and a somewhat stubborn jaw. He had none of the tricks of polished oratory, yet Conwell never appeared before an audience whose attention he failed to gain during the first two minutes. He had their respect in five, their almost hypnotised interest in ten; and thereafter, during the balance of two hours that seemed all too brief, he dominated their emotions as completely as clay is molded by a master sculptor.

His opening platform manner was conversational, friendly, and half confiding. This interval was designed to let the strangeness wear off, to permit the audience to study him and like him.¹⁹¹

In spite of his apparently excellent audience contact, Conwell suffered from stage-fright. This was especially true in his younger days. Higgins says that "notwithstanding his love of public speaking, he was always as nervous as a child whenever expecting to speak in public."¹⁹² Burr quotes Conwell directly:

I often went before audiences in my first twenty years of my public speaking with a sense of my awkwardness and an over-consciousness of my feet and hands, while being introduced; and in a misery of self-condemnation, thinking how absurd it was for me to thrust myself into a place so far beyond my talents and reputation. Often I could see by the smiles and whisperings of the audience that they expected nothing from me but dullness and crudities and sometimes people went out after my introduction and before I had fully begun my address.¹⁹³

¹⁹¹ P. 65.

¹⁹² P. 41.

¹⁹³ P. 335.

This feeling of insecurity apparently spurred him to do his best, for he continues:

At such times there often came to me the determination to fight, and my whole soul was aroused to its highest efforts by the sting and ridicule Then every muscle and nerve and all latent energies of my soul were aroused until, like a flood, they swept me on into rushing torrents of expression so much above my usual thinking, that when I read the shorthand reports, it was a very difficult thing to convince myself that they were my own words.¹⁹⁴

Dr. Conwell's voice is mentioned by several of those who reported on his speeches. Crosby writes that he "had a fine natural voice, well modulated and unusually expressive."¹⁹⁵ The Springfield, Massachusetts, Daily Republican reports that his "voice . . . can be resolute and commanding or unctuous with humor as he desires."¹⁹⁶ Still another writer claims "he has the peculiar, somewhat nasal drawl that the great story-telling president [Lincoln] had."¹⁹⁷ The most unusual description is that of the London Telegraph critic, who wrote in 1870:

The young man is weirdly like his native hills. You can hear the cascades and the trickling streams in his tone of voice. . . . He has a strange and unconscious power of so modulating his voice as to suggest the howl

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ p. 110.

¹⁹⁶ February 29, 1908, p. 5.

¹⁹⁷ Augusta (Georgia) Chronicle, January 4, 1903, p. 3.

of the tempest in rocky declivities, or the soft echo of music in distant valleys He excelled in description, and the writer could almost hear the Niagara roll as he described it, and listened to catch the sound of sighing pines in his voice as he told of the Carolinas. He was so unlike any other speaker, so completely natural, that his blunders disarmed criticism.¹⁹⁸

There is a Presto record of Dr. Conwell telling the Acres of Diamonds incident. The recording is poor so that much of it is now indistinguishable. His rate seemed slow and his voice unexpectedly high-pitched and rather sing-song. His enunciation was generally good. His pronunciation of final and pre-consonantal [r] was in accordance with New England usage, but otherwise his speech standard was primarily General American. The word "diamond" was pronounced with a definite "schwa" off-glide following the diphthong in the initial syllable, so that there were almost three separate syllables.¹⁹⁹

Snapshots reveal that Conwell was a tall, broad-shouldered man with dark hair and eyes. The Cases say he "was of ponderous physique, with stooped shoulders and a somewhat stubborn jaw."²⁰⁰ The reviewer for the Portland Morning Oregonian describes him as "tall, broad-shouldered

¹⁹⁸ Cited in Smith, p. 113.

¹⁹⁹ The record heard by the writer is one in the Conwellana Collection, Temple University.

²⁰⁰ P. 66.

and erect, looking very much younger than his birthdays dare indicate, . . . the embodiment of strength, activity, and mental poise."²⁰¹ Another description of his appearance and platform manner comes from an Augusta paper:

As the man in the pulpit he is Lincoln-esque.

His long body, his face with the seams and lines that forceful character give to the features; his awkward gestures, are all reminiscent of the great President.

His height is lessened by the juxtaposition. He does not wear a silken robe. His costume is a plain black frock coat, black trousers, a round collar and black tie.²⁰²

Conwell apparently put himself whole-heartedly into every illustration in his speech. One reporter discretely says that the "Rev. Mr. Conwell is a magnetic speaker with the ability to cast dignity to the winds when he wishes to score a point"²⁰³ The Cases comment:

His gestures were exquisite pantomime When Conwell mentioned an old man, he was by faultless suggestion a raddled oldster, hobbling and senile. Again, he would mince along with eyebrows raised and head aslant, a rich man's son, or sit, half leering, on a park bench, presumably lost in thought but his roving eye all too obviously intent on the pretty ankles tripping by.²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ January 28, 1909, p. 11.

²⁰² Augusta (Georgia) Chronicle, January 4, 1903, p. 3.

²⁰³ Springfield (Massachusetts) Daily Republican, February 29, 1908, p. 5.

²⁰⁴ Pp. 67-68.

Reviewers of his lectures always agreed on one thing -- that he was witty. These are typical comments: "Mr. Conwell is an entertaining talker and he injected so much humor into his remarks that he kept his audience in an almost constant state of laughter."²⁰⁵ "The lecture was replete with scintillating wit and deep pathos and was highly enjoyed."²⁰⁶ "If the true test of the successful lecturer is his ability to entertain, then Dr. Conwell may be well considered one of the best lecturers that ever came to Savannah."²⁰⁷ "It is doubtful if any lecture of the season has been more thoroughly enjoyed. The Jolly Earthquake is a clever lecture, scintillating with wit and humor"²⁰⁸ "He draws a number of points and surrounds them with brilliant language, clever metaphors and witty applications, and, while his lecture is brimming with humor and many jokes, one realizes that he is at the same time giving a lesson of deep and serious import."²⁰⁹ "His address was brim full of humor, with an occasional

²⁰⁵ Louisville Courier-Journal, March 27, 1901, p. 4.

²⁰⁶ Daily Illinois State Register, Springfield, Illinois, April 25, 1901, p. 5.

²⁰⁷ Savannah Morning News, January 14, 1903, p. 7.

²⁰⁸ Nashville American, February 6, 1903, p. 8.

²⁰⁹ Nashville Banner, February 6, 1903, p. 9.

touch of the pathetic."²¹⁰ "He pleased the large audience with his witty and pointed utterances."²¹¹ "The lecturer . . . spoke with his usual wit and kept his audience laughing throughout most of his talk."²¹² The Rochester (New York) Democrat and Chronicle summarizes:

It is impossible in a short newspaper article to give any idea of the charm and magnetism of the speaker. He was so thoroughly human, and struck so many sympathetic chords of humanity, and at the same time he is so earnest, honest and sincere that he won every heart. He is a brilliant speaker, and his lecture bristled with wit and humor, and it consisted mainly of illustrations which he declared is the best way to enforce the truth.²¹³

Much of this humor must have been implicit in his delivery. He probably used his powers of mimicry and pantomime to the fullest in putting his illustrations across. The following example from "Acres of Diamonds" reveals great possibilities for him to use his dramatic flair:

I do not believe I could describe the young man if I should try. But still I must say that he wore an eyeglass he could not see through; patent-leather shoes he could not walk in, and pants he could not sit down in -- dressed like a grasshopper!

²¹⁰ San Francisco Call, February 6, 1904, p. 9.

²¹¹ Nebraska State Journal, Lincoln, Nebraska, August 14, 1908, p. 5.

²¹² Providence Journal, November 3, 1908, p. 6.

²¹³ P. 10.

Well, this human cricket came up to the clerk's desk just as I came in. He adjusted his unseeing eyeglass in this wise and lisped to the clerk, because it's "Hinglish, you know," to lisp: "Thir, thir, will you have the kindness to fuhnish me with thome papah and thome envelopehs!"²¹⁴

Conwell's voice was expressive, his platform manner was appealing, and his gestures -- though sometimes reported as awkward -- were invaluable in suggesting the character he wished to portray. The source of his humor may be partly found in his delivery.

Summary

From early childhood Russell showed an interest in and aptitude for public speaking. He made a formal study of classical and contemporary speakers and taught classes in oratory. The various professions which he followed -- newspaper work, law and the ministry -- called for a high degree of oral proficiency. With each of these vocations he combined the work of a professional lecturer.

For more than a half century, Conwell was a well-known American preacher and lecturer. His most famous speech was "Acres of Diamonds," with "The Jolly Earthquake" and "The Silver Crown" as runners-up. He made several trips abroad during which he lectured or preached to various European and Asiatic audiences. His later tours were largely

²¹⁴ Case and Case, p. 256.

confined to the United States. Most of his engagements were in New England, the Middle Atlantic states and the Middle West; however, he did make a number of trips to the South, the Southwest and the Pacific coast.

Conwell defined oratory as "the science of effective speech" and thought it should move the audience to definite action. He differentiated oratory and elocution, limiting the latter to the study of voice and gesture. Caldwell may have influenced his thinking on elocution. To be great, Conwell thought, a speaker must serve humanity. Although he recognized the interaction of speaker and audience, Conwell never defined it. His four-point theory of speech organization was patterned on the classic. His advice to aspiring orators was to study famous debaters, to use the resources of the library, and to keep a file of materials.

With respect to his general habits of study and preparation, Conwell used his spare moments to read in a variety of fields. He studied model speeches of the past and of his contemporaries. When he desired specific information, he wrote to those who he thought could supply it, and seems to have been methodical in recording what he thought he might use. His well-developed memory was a valuable study tool. Many topical outlines of his sermons and speeches are extant; however, there is some question as to whether he

actually used these notes while giving a talk. For "Acres of Diamonds," at least, he made a definite attempt to analyze the audience to which he must speak. Conwell had an expressive voice and a responsive body. He used mimicry and pantomime as techniques to further his humor.

CHAPTER TWO

BASIC PREMISES

Every speaker has certain fundamental postulates, which are a point of origin for all his thinking and reasoning. The individual may never state these as a credo in any one specific place, yet they color his entire thought. The purpose of this chapter is to discover Conwell's basic premises. It considers, first, his motives and purposes in lecturing and preaching, and second, his principal assumptions.

Motives and Purposes

To Conwell, public speaking was both a duty and a privilege. He felt himself especially adapted to platform talking. His expression of this feeling was in these words:

There comes to me a serious sense of loss and defeat as I think what might have been accomplished if I had more wisely chosen my occupation in my early years There is always some one thing which a man or woman can do better than he can do anything else, and probably better than it can be done by any other person.

Lecturing should have been my exclusive profession, for in that I have ever found my greatest joy

No man can exaggerate the great exultation of spirit which comes to a public speaker who has an important message to deliver and who is before

a sympathetic audience; who loses himself in his topic and launches out fearlessly into the depth of declamation, invective or entreaty

Oh! those indescribable heights of experience which sometimes come in the midst of a patriotic or religious address, when the speaker is almost unconscious of the excited audiences; when everything is transfigured with a strangely divine glory; and when the full current of the magnetism of the audience seemed to carry the speaker over the loftiest peaks with safety! Then he must feel as the prophets felt when they "lost themselves in the power of God."

. . . Lecturing and preaching have ever seemed to me to be such sacred things that I have been especially grateful to God that I have not been obliged to earn my living thereby. I do not mean to say that it is dishonorable or a matter for criticism, when men are obliged to earn their living by public speech. But it has been a blessing beyond all compare to feel that I can go up on the platform and say to the people what I felt it was most necessary to say, and to say it in my own way, free from all connection with wages, or money reward.¹

The relationship in his thinking between lecturing and preaching is clarified in another statement:

The work of lecturing was always a task and a duty I am sure I would have been an utter failure but for the feeling that I must preach some gospel truth in my lectures and do at least that much toward that ever-persistent "call of God."²

Thus, Conwell approached both sermons and lectures with almost religious zeal. He felt that it was his sacred obligation to speak, and at the same time he greatly enjoyed

¹ Burr, pp. 331-333.

² Acres of Diamonds (Shackleton), p. 178.

the platform situation.

Another motivation for his lecture career is found in the use to which he put his fees. Upon the death of his first wife in 1872 he resolved to give all his future lecture income to the education of needy youths.³ This resolve was strengthened by a visit to Yale, the scene of his own "humiliation and poverty." He determined to devote all the proceeds from his lectures to poor students "so that at least some of those struggling for an education might never know the suffering and humiliation"⁴ he had endured. How keenly Conwell felt about this purpose may be seen in a letter he wrote to his daughter. He said:

To night is my last professional lecture
and a life of work is done. It makes me feel
so strange and so sad. I seem lost and useless.
No more poor boys to help after 60 years of
it.⁵

In February, 1924, Conwell wrote that he often felt too tired to lecture but was spurred on by the thoughts of the boy who needed his help.⁶

The ideal of service was one which motivated both his preaching and lecturing. He felt that the primary

³ Smith, p. 89.

⁴ Burr, pp. 310-311.

⁵ Letter of Russell H. Conwell to Nina Conwell Tuttle, from Syracuse, New York, dated January 3, 1924 (?), deposited in Conwellana Collection, Temple University.

⁶ "Now My Idea Is This!" February 16, 1924.

purpose of preaching, as of all agencies of the church, was to save souls,⁷ and that salvation was man's great need.⁸ His aim in lecturing was to benefit the community in which he spoke.

The sense of responsibility is often a heavy burden to a public teacher, and I have found it difficult to carry, at times, especially where I had been over-advertised and over-estimated, and where I felt sure that I could not do all the wonderful things which had been proclaimed I would do. For the sole purpose in my heart was to do the people good; to leave them wiser or better than I found them⁹

Conwell's sense of obligation to speak, his enjoyment of the platform situation, his use of his lecture fees, and his desire to be of service motivated his speaking.

Basic Tenets

Conwell firmly believed that any individual could "make more of himself than he does, in his own environment, with his own skill, with his own energy, and with his own friends."¹⁰ This implies two ideas: a faith in the future

⁷ "The Mission of the Church," The Temple Magazine, V, 529-530, 533.

⁸ "Appreciate Your Need," Borrowed Axes, pp. 35-43.

⁹ Burr, p. 337.

¹⁰ Harry Julier Quay stenographic transcript of "Acres of Diamonds" as delivered the 5000th time.

of the country and a faith in the capacity of the individual. He affirmed these beliefs numerous times. In his book Acres of Diamonds he wrote that "there are just as many opportunities now as there ever were even in the old communities."¹¹ The New Day, published in 1904, expresses this idea several times.

The chances for riches are many times greater now for poor people than they were even a decade ago; but the increase of opportunity is by the hundred-fold in each ten years. There is now reasonable hope for the hitherto most hopeless, as the gates to wisdom, to love, to wealth, and to happiness swing open so easily that they turn at the touch of almost any man This statement is not a fancy or a guess. It is the calm decision of one who has studied upon these matters through a lifetime.¹²

Elsewhere in the same work he says,

Our nation has serious faults and such rapid evolution must create some discord. But taken altogether it is in every sense to every man who seeks to make life a solid success, the "Land of Opportunity."¹³

He was still voicing the same ideas in 1916. That year he published an article in which he stated, "Your future stands before you like a block of marble -- heredity, environment or man-made obstacles cannot keep you from success if you have determination, health, and normal intelli-

¹¹ Acres of Diamonds: Our Everyday Opportunities and Their Wondrous Riches, p. 350. The same statement is in the earlier, or 1889, edition.

¹² Pp. 1-2.

¹³ Ibid., p. 117.

gence."¹⁴ He concluded the article with these words:

Remember that nothing can withstand a determined will -- unless it happens to be another will equally determined. Keep clean, fight hard, pick your openings judiciously, and have your eyes forever fixed on the heights toward which you are headed.¹⁵

A man in order to succeed must avoid procrastination. Burr states that early in life Conwell heard of William E. Gladstone's "Do It Now" club and immediately took that motto for his own.¹⁶ A man must be persistent if he would succeed. Higgins records, "His motto written in autograph books, but more clearly written in his character is Perseverentia Vincit"¹⁷

The lecture "Acres of Diamonds," which illustrates his philosophy of individual achievement, always contained success stories of individuals who attained fame and material wealth through their own efforts. Commodore Vanderbilt, John Jacob Astor and A. T. Stewart were among those cited. In 1894 Conwell preached, "To succeed in business is a duty to God and a duty to men."¹⁸ These examples,

¹⁴ "What You Can Do with Your Will Power," p. 16.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 100.

¹⁶ P. 347.

¹⁷ P. 35.

¹⁸ "Religion in Business," The Temple Magazine, VI, 231. (Preached May 6, 1894.)

however, do not give the full picture of his economic philosophy. He also pointed out the danger of "encroaching corporations,"¹⁹ maintained that the "twelfth commandment" was the right of every human being to a chance to work to earn his living,²⁰ and told his congregation that "in our city we need more sympathy than we have for the working man."²¹ In speaking of a current Philadelphia strike he condemned equally the "bad" capitalist and the "irresponsible mob," while commending the "good" capitalist and the "law-abiding, honest working-man."²² At the same time he emphasized the responsibility of both groups to the public at large.²³ He upheld the right of labor to bargain²⁴ and insisted that the characteristic of a "Christian bargain" was that both sides profited.²⁵ Near the end of his life, he questioned the amassing of a great fortune by an

¹⁹ "A Present Need," ibid., Vol. III, No. 3, pp. 1-12. (Preached May 17, 1891.) A sermon pointing out the possible dangers of monopolies and combinations is "Decrease in Church Influence," The True Philadelphian, I, 325-334. (Preached December 6, 1897.)

²⁰ "The Twelfth Commandment," The Temple Review, VI, 87-91. (Preached April 22, 1900.)

²¹ "The Church and Politics," ibid., Vol. XXI, No. 10, pp. 3-5. (Preached December 15, 1912.)

²² "The Strike," The Temple Magazine, VII, 619-621. (Preached December 22, 1895.)

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ "The Trolley Strike," The Temple Review, Vol. XVI, No. 17, pp. 3-5. (Preached January 5, 1908.)

²⁵ "Pay Your Debts," ibid., Vol. XXIX, No. 44, pp. 1, 3, 5, 7. (Preached October 30, 1921.)

individual and endorsed higher wages for the rank and file employee. He said:

Now this is a serious question which we as Christian people must consider. Where did this forty-six millions that Mr. Duke gives away come from? We must go back and ask who earned it. Every dollar that is in existence has been earned by someone. Oftentimes money has been transferred to those who have not earned it, but a dollar is not in existence that has not been earned by some laborer. Who earned it? Mr. Duke could not have earned forty-six million dollars. Mr. Rockefeller could not have earned three hundred millions. That is an impossibility.

It brings us back to the reasonable fact that workmen and workingwomen earned all that money, except the millionaire's reasonable salary. Where the division should be made may, perhaps, be yet left to them, as our laws cannot be changed suddenly without causing a great revolution. But it seems to me as though it would have been better if there had been higher wages paid the employees, and their homes thus provided for, for the money has been earned by employees. It has been saved out of their wages and kept in the hands of the employers until it has amounted to millions. They have done a good thing to give that back again to the poor people. But it does not come back directly to the ones who earned it. It goes perhaps to other poor. It is to be "considered" in the legislation, in public opinion, and in Christian teaching, whether the rates of wages is not the very first thing to be "considered" if we would help the poor, as the Lord has commanded us to do.²⁶

Another of Conwell's fundamental assumptions is his belief in the power of education. "Enemies and ignorance are the two most expensive things in a man's

²⁶ "Giving Effectively," The Temple Pulpit, Vol. I, No. 16. (Preached December 28, 1924.)

life,"²⁷ he wrote in 1916. In the section on Vice-Presidential candidate Logan in his biography of Blaine, Conwell stated his belief in education in the following language:

It may be assumed that as the present generation shall receive and educate its children, and welcome the annual swarms of emigrants crowding to our shores, so will the land increase in all that makes a people worthy of everlasting remembrance. And the same conditions which secure this will establish our country in all that a free country can desire: power, honor, comfort, intelligence, and wealth. What some of these conditions are it is not hard to declare, for knowledge universally diffused is so clearly the great force that even a statement to this effect is unnecessary. That "knowledge is power," is a truism now denied by none.²⁸

Perhaps the clearest statement of his educational philosophy may be found in an undated letter to his grandson concerning Temple College. There he states that education should (1) aid the destitute poor, (2) aid the mass of industrious people, earning something who should earn more, do better work, enjoy life more, and (3) aid the unwise wealthy whose libraries are a care and expense, the books not being read. He adds that education of the best quality is the remedy for hunger, loneliness, crime and weakness. "If the world is to be saved by human instruments, it will be perfected and sustained by the great

²⁷ "What You Can Do with Your Will Power," p. 100.

²⁸ P. 504.

hearts and massive minds to be found among the undeveloped of the common people. This is the greatest work of true education."²⁹

Another facet of his educational belief was that schools, colleges, or formal training were not essential to education nor were they always the best method of obtaining an education. He defines "true education" as the "growth of all our spiritual facilities -- head and heart and will, . . . what we get from text-books is the very least part of an education."³⁰ President Woolsey of Yale was at least partially responsible for this attitude. Conwell tells the following story of him:

I well remember a poor shabbily clad country boy³¹ who, friendless and almost penniless, went to him for advice. The boy was too poor to enter the classical course, and had given up all hope of securing an education. But the dear old Solomon in a few minutes' conversation awakened a determination that years did not weaken. "Work it out, work it out, young man," said he. "Go ahead and study. Knowledge is not copyrighted by colleges."³²

²⁹ Letter of Russell H. Conwell to his grandson, undated, deposited in Conwellana Collection, Temple University.

³⁰ Observation: Every Man His Own University, p. 159.

³¹ This "poor shabbily clad country boy" may well have been Conwell himself, for Woolsey was president of Yale during the years Conwell attended that University.

³² Acres of Diamonds: Our Everyday Opportunities and Their Wondrous Riches, pp. 310-311.

In the Blaine biography Conwell declares, "Colleges make no great men. An educated idiot will never make a statesman . . . The great, active, relentless, human world gives a man a place of real influence, and crowns him as truly great for what he really is"33 Another of the biographies Conwell wrote, Life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon the World's Great Preacher, contains a lengthy expression of his view. Conwell says of Spurgeon,

The stubborn fact that he did reach the highest possible position in his profession, without a college training, must be squarely met by all advocates of modern systems of public instruction. It makes clear to the student that our methods of instruction and our systems of school discipline are at least, not a necessity for the attainment of the highest education.

Something is rotten in the states of Denmark, England, and the United States, when it is possible for boys and girls without money, without fame, without special hereditary influence, to reach the noblest positions in the world's activities, without the aid of the endowed institutions which received such continued encomiums. That schools and colleges, universities and scientific institutions are of great value goes without saying. But that they might be of much more value than they are is also certain. For they should combine if possible in their course of instruction the same influences and disciplines which comes to a poor boy working his own way upward through thousands of difficulties and under the most discouraging circumstances.

Lincoln would not have been the saviour of his nation and Spurgeon would not have been

33 P. 46.

the Elijah of his age had they received the usual college education. Such a course would have changed the circumstances and put them in an entirely different relation to the events which moulded them into the characters the world so much needed.

Here, then, is the fact While a college diploma ought to always be a badge of greatness, and ever accompany the history of the most effective intellects, yet it is a startling fact that for some reason it is not practically the certain badge of honor which it should be.³⁴

One of Dr. Conwell's most fervent outbursts on this subject occurred when the Pennsylvania legislature was proposing that no more doctors should be permitted to take the state medical examination unless they were graduates of an approved medical school. At that time he declared:

I believe in proficiency. I believe fully in all the study and instruction and laboratory work possible. But I say, let examinations be the test of fitness -- not hours in classrooms, or credentials from some "approved" college. Let the examinations be as rigid as possible. We cannot be too careful in licensing medical practitioners. But if a man can pass, give him his license, whether he has spent thirty-two hours in an actual classroom or has studied in the barn between chores, or in an attic half the night

Let there be rigid standards of examination -- the same in every state if this be deemed desirable -- a national examination as it were. But let the man who can pass this examination be given his license to practice medicine or dentistry or law, or whatever it is that the spirit

³⁴ Pp. 51-52.

within him had told him is his life-work, no matter how he got his knowledge. Do not let it be obligatory that it must be secured by passing so many hours in the classroom of some "approved" institution.³⁵

Although these statements point out that Dr. Conwell did not believe colleges and universities the only place to secure an education, it must be remembered that he was a strong advocate of these very institutions. He founded and fostered Temple University from the first class of seven members to the annual enrollment, at his death, of 10,000 students. He gave his lecture fees to needy boys and girls who were trying to get a college education.

As many of the quotations already cited reveal, Conwell believed that it is the individual himself who determines the degree of his own education and effectiveness. After the first World War he published a book on how the ex-soldier might succeed, which is simply a suggestion to soldiers to study.³⁶ His first biography of Garfield expounds the belief that the individual has the power to determine his own fate. He states:

Having . . . no faith in the theory that the men of to-day are but the aggregations of experience and developments of the past, and giving but little credit to the claim that ancestry makes the nobleman, we give the line of the Garfield family for the benefit of such

³⁵ Burr, pp. 365-366, 370.

³⁶ How a Soldier May Succeed after the War,
"The Corporal with the Book."

as may deem it important. The tendency of this record is to show that all individuals of the different races are born into the world with very similar characteristics and with much greater equality in mental endowments than aristocracy is willing to admit. It shows, too, that it is not what our fathers were so much as what we make of ourselves, that determines our right to nobility and praise. Ancestry and health wield a perceptible and sometimes a strong influence; but the capital we are born with may be increased a hundred fold by our own exertions. It is this increase which constitutes the noblest claim to human greatness.³⁷

A final part of Conwell's educational philosophy is his belief that the church should provide educational opportunities for its membership. He told his people:

It is the duty of the Christian Church to encourage schools and colleges of every kind for all the people, that every person in every grade of society may be able to investigate in a measure for himself, learning more of God, and being strong and doing "great exploits."³⁸

Another statement of his feeling is this:

I believe every church should institute classes for the education of such people [those who cannot get education other places], and I believe the institutional church will require it. I believe every evening in the week should be given to some particular kind of intellectual training along some educational line; that this training should begin with the more evident needs of the young people in each congregation, and then be adjusted, as the matter grows, to the wants of each.³⁹

³⁷ Pp. 26-27.

³⁸ "Church and Education," The Temple Magazine, VI, 207-209, 212. (Date of preaching not stated.)

³⁹ Burr, p. 273.

The establishment of Temple University is a witness to his congregation's willingness to support his point of view.

Connected with his faith in the individual and in education is his belief in the worth of biography as a field of study. His life of Bayard Taylor, published in 1879, declares, "No text-book of morals or of general history, is so effective in educating the young as the annals of well-spent years, gathered for that purpose."⁴⁰ The "Preface" of the first biography of Garfield states:

. . . the lesson it [his life] teaches, the courage it imparts, the love of honor and truth it awakens, and the sweet pictures of domestic affection, filial devotion, patriotic heroism and religious faith it reveals in our American life, cannot be valued too highly in the education of future generations.⁴¹

The second Garfield work contains a more general statement about the value of biography. It records:

The study of biography in the records of nearly every nation furnishes the surest and easiest means of obtaining certain and lasting information concerning the institutions, character, events, and time. It is, however, in the moral effect upon the readers that the writing and study of biography places its highest claims. It encourages the young, gives hope to the hopeless, warns the careless, cautions, companion, and counselor to every student.⁴² guide, companion, and counselor to every student.⁴²

⁴⁰ "Preface," no page number.

⁴¹ No page number given.

⁴² "Preface," no page number.

The Life and Public Services of James G. Blaine pays similar homage in these words:

Biography is the storehouse of experience. Its chief value is in the helpful information it gives, making the reader stronger, better, wiser, happier, and richer. Hence it is a great satisfaction to an author, who really desires to be of some assistance to his readers, to find a character whose experience contains those helpful qualities to an unusual degree.

The writer has found such a life.

The young will profit by its examples of heroism, self-sacrifice, and perseverance; those in middle life will be encouraged and inspired by its record of well-earned success, after years of toil; and the old will find in it comfort and entertainment, as it accounts for their failures or explains their success.⁴³

In the Life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon Conwell also praises this type of study. His words are:

The study of any successful man's biography, whatever his profession, business or trade, is helpful to every other man in any station. For the same great causes which carry a man to success in one part of our civilization are necessary to the accomplishment of great purposes in any other position.⁴⁴

The basic assumptions of Conwell's thinking with respect to the individual, education, and biography have been pointed out. The next consideration is his concept of the aim of life. Robert O. Kevin states that he remembers some of Conwell's words: "Friends . . . have been my great

⁴³ "Preface," no page number.

⁴⁴ P. 42.

gift from life. It seems to me that is the finest prize any man can get. If you have friends, you have everything -- happiness, contentment, interesting full existence, money, even a job."⁴⁵ Associated with the idea of friends is that of family. In The New Day Conwell wrote, "One of the most conspicuous and fundamental successes of life is in raising a large family to a strong, true, and lovable manhood and woman hood."⁴⁶ Family and friends are not the whole story: a man must fill the needs of others. The following statement comes from the opening sermon at the Temple: "To sacrifice ourselves is not enough. Our offerings must be made useful to others who need."⁴⁷ A complete statement of life's purpose is found in the closing chapter of Acres of Diamonds. There the author writes:

While the author of this book keeps in mind the object for which it is published, he is not unmindful of the fact that, after all, happiness is the end and aim of human life and effort. To get out of life the greatest possible amount of joy is a worthy ambition, and includes all others

Riches may bring joy or pain. Fame may be the source of peace and satisfaction indescribable, or of the most poignant grief Should a person centre his mind and labor on wealth, honor, or greatness, he may still make

⁴⁵ "Religion," Philadelphia Record, February 15, 1943.

⁴⁶ P. 38.

⁴⁷ "Sacred Mementos," manuscript copy of sermon delivered March 1, 1891, filed in Conwellana Collection, Temple University.

a failure of life through his success in securing the object of his ambition. . . . Happiness is not identical with wealth.

Some of the happiest men and women who ever lived have been very poor in property; and there have been men and women whose love for martyrdom was so great that, like John Huss and Annie Askew, they were in the most blissful state when under the most fearful torture This shows that happiness is a condition of mind which may be entirely independent of externals. But as a general rule, the ownership of property, and the possession of a popular, good name, do have a powerful influence in securing peace of mind Love in a cottage is indeed a sweet thing, and is an experience to be treated reverently. It is in many lives the highest joy they ever find. The man with few wants and simple tastes has been the theme of poets and the embellishment of oratory throughout the records of history. But all thinking men know that such a state is semi-barbarous and does not, after all, suggest the noblest, purest joy

It is right and wise for men and women to nurse their ambition to be rich and powerful, and to use all their forces to win the victory; yet, it is wrong and weak in them to fasten their happiness to such uncertainties

Happiness is the test of nobility. No one can be nobly great and habitually unhappy

Have faith in your future. Hope for the best, and remember that the charity which gives others faith and hope must come from a heart in which they are the natural offspring Remember always that the highest condition of happiness is vigorous activity.

So man was made for great enterprises, for inspired activity and for noble loves. Only in those loftier ranges can he find supreme joy. But from the highest spheres he may descend. If these descents cannot destroy his content nor interfere with the flow of peace then he has achieved all that humanity may hope for in this

life. Hence, whether riches or poverty, or the best middle condition be the result of labor, let a man determine always to be content. Ever looking onward and reaching after better things; ever cheerful, whatever be the material change.⁴⁸

In 1921, toward the end of his life, Conwell reaffirmed these beliefs. In an interview for the American Magazine he said:

Get money; get all you honestly can. And get fame; get all you honestly can. But don't be deluded that either your money or your fame are, in themselves, going to bring you happiness.⁴⁹

The secret of success, he said in that same interview, is "first of all the power of adjustability."⁵⁰ He described a practice of his. "At the end of every month I pay my debts, balance my books, and give away the balance, whatever it happens to be."⁵¹ Then in conclusion he declared, "You ask me whether money can help to make your old age happy, and I tell you with all my heart that it certainly can. Provided you don't keep it!"⁵² Conwell seems to have felt that every man was obligated to do the most he could, earn the most money, win the most fame, in order that he

⁴⁸ Acres of Diamonds: Our Everyday Opportunities and Their Wondrous Riches, pp. 598-602.

⁴⁹ "Conversation Between a Young Man and an Old Man," p. 15.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 14.

⁵² Ibid., p. 108.

could use his money or his influence for philanthropic purposes. Only rarely does he recognize that all men are not capable of such successes. "Personal Glimpses of Celebrated Men and Women I Have Known" contains such a realization. After giving the stories of twelve outstanding persons he has known, he develops the idea that he burdensome cares of the truly great are unknown to the man in the street. He concludes, "If God has not called you to be a martyr then thank God there is no need of being a martyr and be happy in your position."⁵³ The sermon, "Thankful for One Talent," expresses the same idea with these words:

Let us sing at night as we retire, let us get up in the morning thanking God, that while the great and the titled and the wealthy have their responsibility, we have no more than God saw best for us to have and no more than we can accomplish, with his assistance.⁵⁴

On another occasion he wrote, "The public man is the most lonesome in the human family,"⁵⁵ and, "Duty is eternal, and its rewards are immortal."⁵⁶

The character of Conwell's religious faith was

⁵³ Manuscript in Conwellana Collection, Temple University.

⁵⁴ The Temple Review, Vol. XIX, No. 41, pp. 1-4, 7. (Preached June 25, 1911.)

⁵⁵ The New Day, p. 96.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 98.

simple and conventional. He believed in heaven,⁵⁷ hell,⁵⁸ and a life after death.⁵⁹ Man knows by "an instinct infallible" that he is a spiritual being.⁶⁰ Conwell thought that salvation, "the highest joy,"⁶¹ was by grace -- "No person can really love God or truthfully serve Him unless he is conscious of the fact that he is a sinner saved by grace."⁶² His primary emphasis, however, was not on the life to come but on present living. He recognized a need for the leadership of God⁶³ and encouraged his congregation to be constantly in prayer.⁶⁴ He believed that the mission of the church was to "save souls"⁶⁵ and that this could be best accomplished through service. Preaching should be

⁵⁷ "What Is Heaven?" The Temple Magazine, V, 260-262. (Preached May 28, 1893.)

⁵⁸ "What Is Hell?" ibid., pp. 243-245. (Preached May 14, 1893.)

⁵⁹ "Is Death Annihilation?" The Temple Review, Vol. XXVIII, No. 12, pp. 1, 3-5. (Preached March 7, 1920.)

⁶⁰ Observation: Every Man His Own University, p. 36.

⁶¹ "The Highest Joy," The Temple Magazine, Vol. III, No. 21, pp. 1-9. (Preached September 20, 1891.)

⁶² "Why Did He Come," The True Philadelphian, IV, 59-64. (Preached April 16, 1899.)

⁶³ "Testing God's Leadership," ibid., 685-689. (Preached September 24, 1899.)

⁶⁴ His sermon of January 2, 1921, was prefaced by calling for a week of prayer in response to a letter from fifty prominent laymen. The Temple Review, Vol. XXIX, No. 4, p. 1. He made similar requests on other occasions.

⁶⁵ "The Mission of the Church."

"by deeds not declamation."⁶⁶ He suggested the following areas of service to members of the congregation: the college, the hospital, church mission points, the Sunday School, the choir, the boys' brigade, writing letters, bringing friends, and contributing funds.⁶⁷

With respect to the science-religion controversy of the turn of the century, Conwell said, "I believe we are going to have another skirmish between church and science; and if so, I want to take my stand on the side of science."⁶⁸ He preached a sermon on "Biblical Evolution," endorsing the theories of Alfred R. Wallace.⁶⁹ On another occasion he said:

As man came up from the lower orders of life and was made above the ruins of animal life into that of reason many instincts remained. But that is no valid argument that humanity is simply animal life of a higher order, -- it doesn't teach that at all.⁷⁰

Three years before the Scopes trial, Conwell publicly objected to William Jennings Bryan's "overly-literal"

⁶⁶ The New Day, p. 84.

⁶⁷ "How to Work in Your Own Church," The Temple Review, VI, 539-540, 543.

⁶⁸ "Warning Against Unbelief," ibid., Vol. XI, No. 14, p. 1.

⁶⁹ The Temple Review, Vol. XXII, No. 16, pp. 3-6.

⁷⁰ "The Secret Door to the Heart."

interpretation of the story of the creation in Genesis.⁷¹ Conwell felt that a single day mentioned in that account might have been a thousand or a million years; the important aspect to him was a recognition of God as Creator.

The source of many of Conwell's beliefs may be traced to the environment of his early years. Carl Russell Fish lists as national characteristics of 1830-1850 "Americanism," "optimism," and "liberty." "Liberty and opportunity, after all, mean responsibility, a sobering thought"⁷² Fish writes of self-improvement, another of Conwell's tenets:

Self-improvement -- that it was the duty of man to control his conduct and that he possessed the power to mold his character -- had ever been a central feature of Calvinistic discipline and particularly in New England. Now under the impulse of national elation this conviction became not merely a solemn duty, with fear of failure always present and with escape from damnation as its most insistent motive; it was a thrilling, almost gay, opportunity, a sure key to the treasures of earth and heaven.⁷³

New England was the home of an "intellectual renaissance."⁷⁴ These were times of great social ferment; many outstanding

⁷¹ "No Change in the Ten Commandments," The Temple Review, Vol. XXX, No. 22, pp. 1, 3, 5-7. (Preached April 23, 1922.)

⁷² The Rise of the Common Man (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927), pp. 1-7.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 10.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 225.

reform and educational movements among the masses of people had their beginnings then.⁷⁵

Henry Steele Commager lists, among other characteristics of the "nineteenth-century American," optimism, individualism and materialism.⁷⁶ Of the latter characteristic he says, "The self-made man, not the heir, was the hero, and by 'made' the American meant enriched."⁷⁷ He continues the description:

His passion for material comforts could not be denied, but this was almost universal in the western world. What was unique -- or shared only by the Scots -- was his even greater passion for education All his institutions advertised his lively concern for education and self-improvement.⁷⁸

Merle Curti, biographer of Elihu Burritt, states:

The idea of self-culture was in the air: in 1838 William Ellery Channing had elaborated this concept in great detail in an address to manual workers in Boston, and it had been re-echoed from innumerable lecture platforms and in dozens of periodicals.⁷⁹

It has already been pointed out that Conwell considered

⁷⁵ Ibid., passim. Especially pertinent are Chapters X and XII, "Education for the People," and "Reform and Slavery" respectively.

⁷⁶ The American Mind: An Interpretation of American Thought and Character Since the 1880's (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), pp. 1-10.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 13.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 37.

⁷⁹ The Learned Blacksmith (New York: Wilson-Erikson Incorporated, 1937), pp. 5-6.

Burritt one of the outstanding men to influence his early life. In addition to observing Burritt's example, Conwell may have heard Burritt's popular lecture, "Application and Genius." In this address Burritt advanced the theory "that genius is made, not inherited; that strong motives, persistent will, and unflagging devotion and application are the chief factors in intellectual achievement."⁸⁰

Conwell himself describes this atmosphere of his early years in the following sentences:

Education was in the air of New England fifty years ago. A half uncle of mine could speak and write seven languages; and yet never in his life was in a city of more than five thousand people. He would take a book with him to the fields and talk Latin with the man who was working for him. Latin was spoken in many of the back districts of New England in my early days, and the desire for knowledge was almost a passion with the people about me when I was young.⁸¹

Burr states that "Samuel Smiles' 'Self Help' . . . had a potent effect upon him."⁸² The first edition of Self Help was brought out in Boston and London in 1859. Thus the book was not published until Conwell was sixteen years old. However, Self Help does expound many ideas found in Conwell's philosophy. The book itself is a series of illustrations from the success stories of famous men --

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 6.

⁸¹ Burr, pp. 77-78.

⁸² Ibid., p. 345.

primarily Englishmen, since Smiles was British. In that respect it is quite similar to "Acres of Diamonds" -- the speech and the book. In the "Introduction to the First Edition,"⁸³ Smiles says that the book arose from a series of lectures he was invited to give to a society of young laboring men, "mutual-improvement youths," who attended classes regularly in the winter evenings.⁸⁴ The "Preface" to the work states:

The object of the book briefly is, to re-ineculcate these old-fashioned but wholesome lessons -- which perhaps cannot be too often urged -- that youth must work in order to enjoy -- that nothing creditable can be accomplished without application and diligence -- that the student must not be daunted by difficulties, but conquer them by patience and perseverance -- and that, above all, he must seek elevation of character, without which capacity is worthless and worldly success is naught.⁸⁵

Again Smiles writes:

Although its chief object unquestionably is to stimulate youths to apply themselves diligently to right pursuits -- sparing neither labor, pains, nor self-denial in prosecuting them -- and to rely upon their own effort in life, rather than depend upon the help and patronage of others, it will also be found,

⁸³ The first edition was not available for study. The available edition was published in New York by Harper and Brothers in 1870. This edition included the "Introduction to the First Edition" on pp. ix-xii.

⁸⁴ The account of these classes may have influenced Conwell in later years when he organized the classes of young men which grew into Temple University.

⁸⁵ P. vii.

from the examples given of literary and scientific men, artists, inventors, educators, philanthropists, missionaries, and martyrs, that the duty of helping one's self in the highest sense involves the helping of one's neighbors.⁸⁶

These statements are certainly closely akin to many of the sentiments expressed by Conwell. There are several similar books which Conwell mentions reading. However, their dates of publication range from 1873 to 1884; and therefore, it hardly seems likely that they exerted any great influence on the formation of Conwell's basic premises -- merely strengthened them.⁸⁷

Summary

To Russell Conwell, public speaking was both an obligation and a pleasure. He was motivated by the feeling that in his lectures and sermons he must contribute some "gospel truth" toward the "ever-persistent 'call of God.'" He wanted what he said to be of service to the community

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. vi.

⁸⁷ The works alluded to are:
William Mason Cornell, How to Enjoy Life; or, Practical Hints on the Preservation of Health (Boston: E. B. Russell, 1873).

Lyman Abbott, editor, How to Succeed in Public Life, as a Minister, as a Physician, as a Musician, as an Artist, in Mercantile Life, as a Farmer, as an Inventor, and in Literature (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1882).

Alfred H. Guernsey, The World's Opportunities and How to Use Them (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1884).

in which he spoke, and he used his lecture fees to educate needy college students.

Conwell had a life-long faith in the capacity of each individual to direct his own destiny and in the American nation as the land of opportunity. He assumed that education (not restricted to formal schooling) was the solution to all problems. A natural concomitant of his beliefs in the individual and education was his concept of biography as the best text. He thought that happiness should be the aim of life. Friends, family, and service to others were considered sources of happiness. His religious faith was simple and largely fundamental, although he was among those who accepted scientific discoveries as no threat to the Bible. The New England environment of his early years was instrumental in shaping his views.

CHAPTER THREE

LECTURES

For more than sixty years, Russell Conwell made lecturing a part of his career. By 1922 he reportedly had delivered more than 12,000 platform lectures in addition to his sermons and his miscellaneous speeches at educational meetings, business conferences, and other public gatherings.¹ The lecture, "Acres of Diamonds," was delivered on approximately half of these 12,000 occasions.² Although he had a number of popular lectures, complete speech texts remain for only five of them -- "Acres of Diamonds," "The Silver Crown," "Personal Glimpses of Celebrated Men and Women," "The Angel's Lily," and "The Jolly Earthquake."³ There are also the outlines of "Artemus Ward" and of "Garibaldi."

Using the five complete lectures and the two outlines, this chapter investigates: (1) the nature of the

¹ "Marvelous Achievements of 79 Years," The Temple Review, Vol. XXX, No. 16, p. 3.

² Ibid.

³ In this chapter the standard source for "Acres of Diamonds" is Modern Eloquence, for "The Silver Crown" The Temple Review, for "Personal Glimpses" the typescript in the Conwellana Collection of Temple University, and for "The Angel's Lily" and "The Jolly Earthquake" the books published under the same titles as these two lectures.

themes upon which he spoke; (2) the forms of his lectures; (3) the kinds of supporting material; and (4) his style.

Lecture Themes

Throughout its many deliveries, the theme of "Acres of Diamonds" remained the same. Burr records:

In substance, the theme of "Acres of Diamonds" is that people listening to idle tales of "easy money" to be had somewhere far away are apt to neglect the wealth that lies all around them awaiting development.⁴

Smith states:

Love in action, love incarnate, love the essence of life, love a principle of all conduct . . . is the idea which, applied to the practical affairs of life, and its efficiency demonstrated by many illustrations and reference to the experiences of successful people, is the cornerstone of his great lecture, "Acres of Diamonds."⁵

Conwell himself says:

"Acres of Diamonds" -- the idea -- has continuously been precisely the same. The idea is that in this country of ours every man has the opportunity to make more of himself than he does in his own environment, with his own skill, with his own energy, and with his own friends.⁶

"Acres of Diamonds" never contains a one-sentence statement of the proposition. However, the lecture is always built around the idea that an individual can improve his economic

⁴ P. 299.

⁵ P. 14.

⁶ Acres of Diamonds (Shackleton), p. 2.

condition and can achieve "true greatness" by discovering opportunities right at home to serve his fellow. "Find a need and fill it" is the formula for success.

The theme of "The Silver Crown" is closely related to that of "Acres of Diamonds." The speaker is again concerned with pointing out the road to success. His chief emphasis is on the necessity of noticing conditions around one and then using these observations to determine one's course of action. Near the mid-point of the lecture, Conwell declares: "It is ever the same. Wherever you look, success in any branch of achievement depends upon this ability to get one's education every day as one goes along from the events that are around us now." "The Silver Crown" also stresses service to mankind. Summarizing the last illustration of the lecture, Conwell points out:

But he was a king. He heard humanity's cry . . . and whenever you find on earth a successful man or woman you will always find it is a man or woman who hears humanity's call, and who has so used his every day means of observation that he knows where the weapons are with which to fight those battles, or where the means are with which to bring men relief.

"Personal Glimpses" differs radically in theme from the other two. In this lecture Conwell apparently realizes that everyone cannot achieve greatness. Each of the stories that he tells about a "celebrated" man or woman makes the point that the individual had to sacrifice many of the joys of home and family life. His concluding

paragraphs are:

Don't be ambitious. But friends, if God has ever called you to any situation that requires the sacrifice of time and money and home and pleasure, for humanity, if He calls you to some place of duty where it is your plain duty to sacrifice your lives to others, then count yourselves happy.

If God has not called you to be a martyr then thank God there is no need of being a martyr and be happy in your position. Yes, if you can go home at night with your dinner pail, and sit down in your little cottage, take your children on your knees, read a good book; if your wife is a treasure in the home, and brings peace and satisfaction; if you can come to that simple home and earn an honest living by day and invest it wisely and honestly; if you wish that treasure house to be a treasure house than [sic] to have adulation and fame -- then remember what Wendell Phillips said about it, "All within this gate is Paradise; all without it is martyrdom."

The only adverse newspaper comment discovered on any of his lectures is one apparently referring to the theme of "Personal Glimpses." Having written that "there is never a lack of interest while Dr. Conwell is talking, even when he deals with subjects and truths that are simple and trite,"⁷ the reporter then proceeds to disagree with the theme of the lecture. He asks how Conwell can "square it" with "Acres of Diamonds" or "even in his own life."⁸

⁷ Augusta (Georgia) Chronicle, January 7, 1903, p. 4.

⁸ Ibid. According to his engagement book, Conwell was supposed to give "The Jolly Earthquake" in Augusta. The Chronicle report does not state the title of the lecture; however, the remarks in the article indicate that "Personal Glimpses" was what he actually delivered.

The theme of "The Angel's Lily" is stated immediately after the introductory illustration in these words:

It [the legend of the angel's lily] was an illustration, a symbol; and as I studied long I found it reaching into all avenues of life, and, lo, it was one of the best descriptions of a philosophy of happiness that I ever saw put into any form, either in book or public speech. Because it is, after all, the place where men are happiest, half-way between Borzar, the hovel, and Bagdad, the magnificent palace of the Caliph.

The lecture points out the advantages of moderation or of the mean in such varied fields as financial, educational, home, political, and religious. This summarizing sentence is a part of the conclusion:

Angels always plant their most glorious and purest lilies half-way between covetousness and wastefulness; between slavery and anarchy; between starvation and gluttony; between rags and gaudiness; between laziness and overwork; between egotism and abnegation; between flattery and insult; between carelessness and worry; between refreshment and drunkenness; between cowardice and recklessness; between thoughtless obedience and riotousness; between silence and garrulousness; between poverty and riches; between the jail and the desert; between coldness and passion; between the infidel and the troglodyte; between the woman-hater and the woman-worshipper; between the treadmill and the runway; between midnight and noon; between the giant and the pigmy; between profanity and the pious whine; between stagnation and storm; between arctic cold and tropic heat; between green apples and those in decay; between idiocy and lunacy; between Bagdad and Borzar.

Conwell emphasizes that happiness is found in the great middle-ground rather than in extremes of any kind.

The theme of "The Jolly Earthquake" is that

laughter has great constructive power in business, in mental hygiene, and in physical health, and as an agency of reform in personal habits, politics and religion. Conwell's concluding paragraph is:

If I knew of a heart filled with deepest grief; if I knew of a family divided by domestic quarrels; if I knew of a city that was filled with poverty and woe; if I knew of a State into which there had come an awful tyranny, I know of nothing I could do to put joy into that sad heart, peace and love into that family's domestic life, or take into that city or State lasting prosperity, more potent than to put into that heart, into that family, and into that State, a "Jolly Earthquake" of which Oshima was such a symbol.

The central thought of "Garibaldi" seems to be that there are "lessons" which can be learned from his life. Six lessons are enumerated:

1. Sickly babies may be useful.
2. Be careful what songs you sing and what tales you tell your children.
3. Let a boy choose his own profession.
4. Mothers should hold the faith of their children.
5. Let the children joke.
6. The path of duty is the path of safety.

A one-sentence proposition embracing all these points might be: Any individual, given the proper environment and the opportunity for self-expression, may become a valued member of society who walks the path of duty and service.

"Artemus Ward" apparently tells the story of the

humorist's life, gives some of his jokes, and traces the "rise of successors."

Running through all the lectures is the idea of success. The definition of what constitutes success, however, varies among the speeches. "Acres of Diamonds" and "The Silver Crown" seem to define it in terms of mastery of one's environment and service to others. "Garibaldi" probably belongs in the same category. "The Jolly Earthquake" limits itself to discussing one asset for success, laughter; it suggests that through laughter one can improve his own personality and influence his environment for the better. "Personal Glimpses" recognizes that material possessions or fame are not always synonymous with success. It emphasizes being content with one's lot in life and finding happiness in one's home and family. Conwell expressed the same idea in his book, Acres of Diamonds: Our Everyday Opportunities and Their Wondrous Riches.

While the author of this book keeps in mind the object for which it is published, he is not unmindful of the fact that, after all, happiness is the end and aim of human life and effort. To get out of life the greatest amount of joy is a worthy ambition, and includes all others

Riches may bring joy or pain. Fame may be the source of peace and satisfaction indescribable, or of most poignant grief Should a person centre his mind and labor on wealth, honor, or greatness, he may still make a failure of life through his success in securing the object of his ambition. . . . Happiness is not identical with wealth.⁹

"The Angel's Lily" also considers success in terms of happiness. It maintains that the happiest people are those in the great middle class -- neither too rich nor too poor, too famous nor too obscure. There is insufficient data on "Artemus Ward" to determine whether it concerns itself with success.

Conwell's lecture themes grow out of his basic tenets. "Acres of Diamonds" and "The Silver Crown" clearly stem from his faith in the capacity of the individual and in the future of the country. "The Silver Crown" also shows the influence of his belief that schools or formal training were not essential to education. "Personal Glimpses" is drawn from his philosophy that the aim of life is happiness with the corollary that happiness comes in part from one's associations with family and friends. "The Jolly Earthquake" lays a premium on cheerfulness as an aid to success and happiness, ultimate goals that are fundamental in Conwell's thinking. His belief in biography as a teaching device probably influenced Conwell's choice of Garibaldi and of Artemus Ward as subjects for lectures.

Lecture Forms

Conwell's lectures seem to have in common the general purpose of stimulating his audiences. Speech theorists differ somewhat in characterizing the end, to stimulate; however, Brigrance's interpretation of the term

includes two aspects found in Conwell's speeches -- (1) the speaker's beliefs are already held "in a mild form" by his hearers, and (2) the speaker may try to "animate to action" those who hear him.¹⁰ Certainly Conwell's lectures contain nothing in the theses or underlying premises which would arouse any degree of antagonism in the minds of most of his listeners. They wanted to hear what he told them. For his part, Conwell lectured to aid "a needy audience,"¹¹ "to do the people good, to leave them better and wiser"¹² than he found them. In the case of "Acres of Diamonds," Mrs. Conwell is reported to have kept a record of physical improvements made in various communities as a result of his suggestions.¹³ In his speeches he frequently cited examples of those who had acted upon the philosophy he was advocating. Conwell's lectures were stimulating in that he spoke to activate existing beliefs of the majority of his audiences.

Conwell thought there were four steps in the organization of a speech: "to call for attention, to tell some facts, to reason from these facts, and to urge the listener to do something about it which . . . [the speaker

¹⁰ William Morwood Brigrance, Speech Composition (New York: F. S. Crofts and Company, 1937), p. 80.

¹¹ Burr, p. 334.

¹² Ibid., p. 337.

¹³ "Now My Idea Is This!" February 15, 1924.

wishes] done."¹⁴ In a general sense, the structure of his lectures was in harmony with his philosophy.

Conwell introduced four of his lectures -- "Acres of Diamonds," "The Silver Crown," "The Angel's Lily," and "The Jolly Earthquake" -- by telling legends which he had heard in his travels abroad. In each case the title of the speech comes from the introductory story. "Personal Glimpses," as it was actually delivered, has an opening paragraph explaining the reasons for presenting the talk. Conwell begins:

Well, friends, I have come to talk with you for a few minutes for a double purpose just now -- a triple purpose. First, because you are giving your gift of tribute towards the help of the Church; secondly, because Harper Brothers, the Publishers, in New York, intend to bring out this lecture with its additions as a new book and they wish to have a verbatim report of it to-night; and thirdly, because I love to talk about these things with my friends if I feel that I can be of any positive gain to them

When he edited the lecture, Conwell eliminated this paragraph completely. It is possible that he may have had similar openings, adapted to the immediate audience and occasion, in his other lectures before they were corrected for publication. The Quay typescript of "Acres of Diamonds" as delivered for the five thousandth time has fourteen paragraphs preceding the title story; with the exception of these

¹⁴ Acres of Diamonds: Our Everyday Opportunities and Their Wondrous Riches, pp. 394-395.

The "Philosophy of Speech" section, presented in Chapter One above, gives a fuller discussion of Conwell's ideas on organization.

paragraphs, which are deleted in publication, the version of "Acres of Diamonds" in Shackleton is substantially the same as the manuscript. The deleted paragraphs are an adaptation to the occasion, including a few remarks on what the nature of "Acres of Diamonds" has been throughout its previous deliveries.

There is nothing corresponding to a "statement of facts" in any of the lectures. "The Angel's Lily" has a theme sentence at the close of the introduction. Similarly, "The Jolly Earthquake" has a general statement of the subject:

For many men and many nations have been made happy, and great, and their lives beautiful, by the coming of laughter in the midst of great disaster. In the time of trouble, the man who can face death and laugh in its face amid the greatest horrors, shows the sublimest side of human character.

The second paragraph of "Personal Glimpses," which becomes the opening paragraph of the edited lecture, is a statement of purpose.

I do not come to-night to bring you anecdotes of my life selected from those that I think are particularly romantic Neither do I come to select anything with which I, myself, have been connected as an actor of any kind. And I do not come to bring most interesting points of history in the eighty years of my existence. But I do come just to give you glimpses of certain men and women whom I have had the good fortune to see, and to tell you what I think is the lesson of their lives -- the one common lesson of all their lives.

"Acres of Diamonds" and "The Silver Crown" do not contain

a clear statement of theme or of purpose early in the speeches.

The organization of the discussion sections varies somewhat from lecture to lecture. Conwell writes of "Acres of Diamonds":

. . . the lecture has been divided into three great divisions, each of them based upon one of the principles things in which assistance or encouragement is needed by a majority of the people of the country. The fundamental things are to better themselves economically, to do more thinking and to do Christian thinking and Christian deeds.¹⁵

He labels these divisions the "economic problem,"¹⁶ the "mental side,"¹⁷ and the "cultural, moral and religious"¹⁸ aspect. There is rarely a clear-cut differentiation among these divisions. By actual page count, Conwell devoted approximately two-thirds of the lecture to discussing the obtaining of material wealth. He maintained, however, that there were other things more important than wealth and spent the other third of his time in considering the nature of "true greatness."

According to the legend, the man born to wear "The Silver Crown" had to be one whom (1) the animals follow, (2) the sun serves, (3) the waters obey, and (4) mankind

¹⁵ "How My Idea Is This!" February 15, 1924.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., February 16, 1924.

¹⁸ Ibid.

loves. Having related the tale, Conwell then adapted these four characteristics as a means of organizing the speech. His first point was on the service that animals could render mankind. By combining the second and third characteristics, he developed his second point, which dealt with the importance of learning to control the forces of nature. His last point was on the benefactors of mankind. Here he discussed specifically the need for artists, writers, musicians and orators.

"The Angel's Lily" discusses the value of moderation in seven areas: finance, education, home, politics, philanthropy, religion, and fashion. Conwell occasionally uses the technique of internal summaries and topic sentences between two divisions. For example, he concludes the section on finance with these words:

Successful life and successful business is the one that works like that That steady, permanent advance is a much better place in business than is any sudden speculation which overloads a man with responsibility and anxiety. The way to be happy in getting rich is to proceed in that steady and careful way.

Then he immediately states the topic sentence for the next section: "Happiness, or the Angel's Lily, blooms in learning where a man may know too little or a man may know too much."

"The Jolly Earthquake" uses the legend from which it draws its name in a different manner from the other lectures. The complete story of the earthquake is not given

initially -- only a portion of it. Then each new section of the speech is introduced with another incident which happened during the earthquake. There are four major divisions: the effect of laughter on business; the effect of laughter on mental health; the effect of laughter on physical health; and the reforming effects of laughter on personal habits, political and religious beliefs. Preceding the fourth section is a digression on the jokes which have amused various famous people.

There is no particular pattern of internal organization for "Personal Glimpses." The speech has unity because each of the "glimpses" of a famous individual points out that person's desire for opportunity to enjoy his home and family.

"Garibaldi" was apparently organized around the six "lessons" to be learned from his life.

There is no indication of any particular form of organization for "Artemus Ward."

Thonssen and Baird consider that there are three general bases of division -- the historical method, the distributive method, and the logical method.¹⁹ Conwell's lectures clearly fall into the second or distributive order.

For his conclusions, Conwell always employed a summary or restatement of the idea expressed in the lecture.

¹⁹ Lester Thonssen and A. Craig Baird, Speech Criticism (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1948), pp. 394-395.

For approximately half of his speeches he added a poetic quotation. "The Angel's Lily," "The Silver Crown," and two of the four known versions of "Acres of Diamonds" end with poetry.

Kinds of Supporting Material

The illustration was Conwell's favorite method of establishing a point. He uses stories and examples almost exclusively as the material for his lectures. In his speeches he explains his reasons for employing illustrations with these sentences: "I want to illustrate again, for the best way to teach is always by illustration."²⁰ "I will not argue. I will illustrate because you can remember the illustrations and you would perhaps forget the argument."²¹ "The effect of laughter on the mind I may teach better by illustrations than by arguments."²² "I can illustrate these things by homely incidents, and I find in mine age that homely illustrations are the best."²³

Conwell's illustrations came almost exclusively from his own personal experience. His travels in other

²⁰ "Acres of Diamonds."

²¹ "The Silver Crown."

²² "The Jolly Earthquake."

²³ Ibid.

lands provided him with the title stories for "Acres of Diamonds," "The Angel's Lily," "The Jolly Earthquake," and "The Silver Crown." In addition to these four legends which he is reported to have heard in foreign countries, he also included occasionally his personal experiences abroad. For example, in "The Jolly Earthquake" Conwell recounts an incident which occurred when he and Mrs. Conwell were staying in London "at a boarding house on Gower Street." His boyhood on the farm gave him such stories as the one of the old cow, which is in "The Angel's Lily." He tells of his homecoming as a Civil War "hero" in "Acres of Diamonds." When Conwell was a reporter on the Tribune, Horace Greeley gave him the assignment to find out what jokes amused prominent people. Conwell later used this material in one section of "The Jolly Earthquake." Several of the illustrations in "Personal Glimpses" come from his newspaper experience. In introducing the story of the first time he saw Empress Eugenie, Conwell says:

In 1870 I went to France as a war correspondent in the war between Germany and France. And I was invited with Henry W. Stanley to the great feast in the Tuileries when the French Army marched out. We were in the rear of the hall, not invited to sit. Only the nobility were seated. At the farther end of that table sat the Emperor Napoleon III and the Empress Eugenie.

When he tells of Dickens' funeral, also in "Personal Glimpses," Conwell reports, "A correspondent of the New York Herald and myself arranged with the sexton to let us

in the back way if we would stand back and not be seen."

Conwell's legal practice provided him with some of his examples. In "Acres of Diamonds" he states:

The last law case I ever tried in my life was in the United States Courtroom at Boston, and this very Hingham man who had whittled those toys stood upon the stand. He was the last man I ever cross-examined . . . I said to this man as he stood upon the stand:

Many of his illustrations grew out of a chance meeting with some other person -- the theological student who came to disagree with his interpretation of a Bible verse,²⁴ the woman who sold potatoes in a Philadelphia market stall,²⁵ the traveling salesman who stayed at the same hotel as Conwell,²⁶ or the "visiting elocutionist" who recited "Peter Piper" for his class.²⁷

Conwell used numerous stories from the lives of prominent people. For example, he developed "Personal Glimpses" by the citing of incidents in the lives of famous men and women such as John Brown, William Lloyd Garrison, Frederick Douglass, Henry Ward Beecher, William Cullen Bryant, Abraham Lincoln, Wendell Phillips, Frances Willard, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Artemus Ward, Empress Eugenie, and Charles Dickens. The other lectures also include

²⁴ "Acres of Diamonds."

²⁵ "The Jolly Earthquake."

²⁶ "The Angel's Lily."

²⁷ "The Silver Crown."

illustrations about well-known individuals. "Acres of Diamonds" cites Cornelius Vanderbilt, A. T. Stewart, John Jacob Astor, Cyrus McCormick, James A. Garfield, Abraham Lincoln, Robert E. Lee and Columbus. In "The Silver Crown" there are stories about Oliver Wendell Holmes, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, George Stephenson, Charlotte Bronte, and Professor Slayton, the "national botanist" of England. "The Jolly Earthquake" includes reports of Conwell's interviews with Henry Ward Beecher, Charles Sumner, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Harriet Beecher Stowe. Stories about John Gough, Benjamin Butler, and Robert E. Lee also appear. "The Angel's Lily" mentions John Ruskin, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Bishop Potter. There were probably similar references in "Garibaldi," for the outline of that lecture includes the following names: Carlyle, Horace Man [sic], Vanderbilt, "Little Sheridan," Watts, Alexander, Joan of Arc, General Grant, Garfield, Caesar, Wellington, Peter the Great, and Lincoln.

While most of Conwell's illustrations are from his personal experience or from the lives of the great, he sometimes repeated a story which he had heard from someone else. For example, in "Acres of Diamonds" he introduces an anecdote with the statement, "Professor Agassiz, the great geologist of Harvard University, that magnificent scholar, told us, at the Summer School of Mineralogy, that there once lived in Pennsylvania a man who owned a farm" A

similar statement appears in "The Jolly Earthquake," "I remember George William Curtis making an address in which he told of the farmer" Another example from "The Jolly Earthquake" is, "Some years ago Bishop Havens in Boston told me how a church was saved from an awful quarrel by laughter."

In addition to these actual illustrations Conwell frequently included hypothetical ones. A typical one from "The Angel's Lily" is:

A home does not consist of a house, whether it be large or small. Did you ever begin housekeeping in two rooms? . . . Many do begin in that way, and do you remember how handy everything was? The bedroom was a bedroom, a library, a picture-gallery, the storehouse and the cellar. The other room was the dining room, the parlor, the kitchen, and the refrigerator. The table was in the middle of that small room, the cook-stove over there; and your wife could sit there and throw the slap-jacks right over on your plate; and you always found them hot. Oh, do you remember that? . . . Now, have you set in your mansion the plate-glass doors, your cathedral windows, your brown-stone front, with the beautiful garden in the rear? . . . Do you live in that house, and are you happy in it now? My friend, tonight it storms, and you will go home in the rain, and you will go to the nearest front door and ring the bell. Some one will come to the inside of the door, and it is your wife. She sees that it is nobody but you at the front. She shouts: "Go around to the back door with your wet feet! You can't come into the front door of this house with wet feet!" . . . You're happy, are you? In the parlor you sit down with friends, and your wife looks over the banister continually to see that you don't kick over some of the bric-a-brac crowded in there. When you go to the table you don't know what spoon to use for soup, or what's for fish; whether you put the napkin in your neck or in your lap. You are in

confusion, lose your appetite, you are puzzled, and your home, crushed under bags of gold, is destroyed; because you have gone beyond the Angel's Lily

Conwell rarely employed other forms of supporting material. He did not cite authorities except in the sense that his selection of illustrations from the lives of the famous might be considered a type of authority. Conwell quotes the Bible once in "Acres of Diamonds" and another time in "The Angel's Lily." In the former speech appears "The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him."²⁸ In the latter is "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."²⁹ All of the lectures except "The Jolly Earthquake" contain at least one quotation from poetry. "Acres of Diamonds" quotes four lines from Tennyson's "The Brook" and concludes with seven lines from "Pestus (The Aim of Life)" by Philip James Bailey. "The Angel's Lily" closes with Leigh Hunt's "Abou Ben Adhem." In "Personal Glimpses" are a part of Bryant's "Thanatopsis" and Longfellow's "Bayard Taylor." "The Silver Crown" contains the first verse of Longfellow's "Little Women" and a parody, ascribed to Oliver Wendell Holmes, of Longfellow's "Psalm of Life"; it concludes with

²⁸ John 13:16.

²⁹ Matthew 25:40.

the last stanza of "What I Live For" by George Linnaeus Banks.³⁰ Conwell uses statistics occasionally. "Acres of Diamonds" states that in Massachusetts not one rich man's son in seventeen dies rich; that in Boston 96 out of every 100 successful merchants were born poor; that "trustworthy" statistics show that among rich men's sons not one in a thousand dies rich; and that of 107 millionaires in New York only seven made their money in New York while 67 made their money in towns of less than 3,500. The only other speech to employ statistics is "The Jelly Earthquake"; in it is the statement, "Do you know that five years ago, in the State of New Jersey, the number of insane increased 13 % in a single year?"

Gray and Braden state that the supporting

³⁰ Conwell revised Banks' poem somewhat. The stanza actually reads:

I live for those who love me,
 For those who know me true,
 For the Heaven that smiles above me,
 And awaits my spirit too;
 For the cause that lacks assistance,
 For the wrong that needs resistance,
 For the future in the distance,
 And the good that I can do.

Conwell's version is:

We live for those who love us,
 For those who know us true;
 For the heavens that bend above us,
 For the good that we can do.
 For the wrongs that lack resistance,
 For each cause that needs assistance,
 For the future in the distance,
 For the good that we can do.

materials for a speech may serve any one of three purposes:

(1) to clarify, (2) to prove, and (3) to amplify.³¹

Conwell's supporting material clearly falls in the third category. His themes were sufficiently obvious that they did not need clarification. He did not attempt to prove logically the points of his lectures. His illustrations and other supporting materials were used to enlarge upon the themes.

Considerable ethical proof appears in all Conwell's lectures. He shows himself a man of character and integrity by expressing concern for the accuracy of his statements. In "Acres of Diamonds" he says:

Now let me speak with the greatest care lest my eccentricity of manner should mislead my listeners, and make you think I am here to entertain more than to help. I want to hold your attention on this oppressive night, with sufficient interest to leave my lesson with you.

The same paragraph also illustrates his good will toward the audience. A similar example of his expressed concern for accuracy comes from "Personal Glimpses." "Therefore, I enter upon this recital with an extreme caution. I must not relate anything in understatement or overstatement because I would fail in my conclusions if I did." Conwell indicates repeatedly that he is speaking from personal

³¹ Giles Wilkeson Gray and Waldo W. Braden, Public Speaking: Principles and Practice (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961), p. 281.

experience. Reasoning from what he knows tends to establish him as a man of intelligence. In telling the title incidents of "Acres of Diamonds," "The Silver Crown," "The Jolly Earthquake," and "The Angel's Lily," Conwell makes it clear that he learned those stories as a result of traveling abroad. Most of his other illustrations come even more directly from his personal experience. Some of his statements are: "I went out to see the soft-coal miners recently, and as I visited there and had a talk with them as they were going into a 'strike'"32 "I was in England as a correspondent, and I went to see him [Ruskin]"33 "As I have studied the subject through the years"34 "I have been told by men expert in the knowledge of mental diseases"35 ". . . it is historically true"36 and "That statement is literally true."37 Conwell's most frequent form of ethical proof consisted in identifying himself with his hearers. He states in "The Silver Crown": "I want you to be happy, I wish you to be mighty forces for Christ and for man; I wish you to have fine houses and fine

32 "The Angel's Lily."

33 Ibid.

34 "The Jolly Earthquake."

35 Ibid.

36 "Acres of Diamonds."

37 Ibid.

libraries and money invested, and here is the infallible read to it." Another example comes from "Personal Glimpses": "I love to talk about these things with my friends if I feel that I can be of any positive gain to them" He identified himself with the audience by such statements as "You and I would enjoy an income like that"38 A good example of his technique of identifying himself with the audience comes from "The Silver Crown."

I know by an instinct infallible that I am a spiritual being, separate from this material. You know that. No scientist can disprove it. It is a fact we all know. I know that I can never die, and you know it unless you have gotten educated out of it. You know that you can never die.

In establishing rapport with his listeners, Conwell frequently made personal references to himself which pictured him as a common, ordinary member of the human family. "Well, I know, by experience, that a priest is very cross when awakened early in the morning."39 "I know by experience that a very ordinary man can be a lawyer. I also know that it does not take a man with a gigantic intellect to be a preacher."40 "Although in my teens, I was marching at the head of that company and puffed out with pride. A cambric needle would have burst me all to pieces!"41

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.

Similar to these are the stories he told on himself such as getting sick from eating "a supper all pie," being "unequally yoked" to a contrary cow, and breaking eggs all over himself and his clothes when he tried to carry one too many.⁴²

Motive appeals of several kinds appear in Conwell's lectures. Both "Acres of Diamonds" and "The Silver Crown" address themselves to the hearer's desire for financial success and prestige among his peers. Both also stress love for and service to mankind. The conclusion of "Acres of Diamonds" has this appeal:

Greatness really consists in doing great deeds with little means -- in the accomplishment of vast purposes; from the private ranks of life -- in benefiting one's own neighborhood, in blessing one's own city, the community in which he dwells. There, and there only, is the great test of human goodness and human ability

I learned that lesson then, that henceforth in life I will call no man great simply because he holds an office. Greatness! It is something more than office, something more than fame, more than genius! It is the great-heartedness that encloses those in need, reaches down to those below, and lifts them up. May this thought come to every one of these young men and women who hear me speak to-night and abide through future years.

A statement in "The Silver Crown" is: "There is a need to-day. Prayers go up to heaven for men and women now whom mankind shall love -- love because they are great benefactors;

⁴² "The Angel's Lily."

love, because while they are making money or gaining fame or honor for themselves . . . [they] are also blessing humanity all the way along." The basic appeal in "Personal Glimpses," "The Angel's Lily," and "The Jolly Earthquake" is to man's desire for happiness. The love of home and family is the emotion connected with happiness in "Personal Glimpses." "The Angel's Lily" says that there is happiness in moderation, in the avoidance of extremes of any kind. The last paragraph of "The Jolly Earthquake" demonstrates the appeal found throughout the speech:

If I knew of a heart filled with deepest grief; if I knew of a family divided by domestic quarrels; if I knew of a city that was filled with poverty and woe; if I knew of a State into which there had come an awful tyranny, I know of nothing I could do to put joy into that sad heart, peace and love into that family's domestic life, or take into that city or State lasting prosperity, more potent than to put into that heart, into that family, and into that State, a "Jolly Earthquake" of which Oshima was such a symbol.

Although these motives received primary emphasis, Conwell also appealed to other drives. For example, in "The Angel's Lily" he makes a plea to patriotism.

I will close by saying that we are getting far advanced in civilization in this country, and the truest and best thing that I can say at this time is that I believe it is permanent. I believe it is going to stand. We are not in favor of any revolution, and I do not believe there is going to be any. Because of the good sense of our great American citizens of the great middle class of people After all, the great government of this country is going to be borne triumphantly through all its difficulties by the even balance of the middle class

of people, which is an honor to America and which has maintained so grandly the honor of the American flag.

. . . The common sense of the people will come back to claim its own Do your duty and trust; and your nation shall yet arise out of all this agitation into nobler living, made lovely by our serving God and man, with our eyes on the future and our feet on the ground.

Style

According to Gray and Braden, in wording a speech there are three specific objectives: clarity, vividness, and impressiveness.⁴³ These three are used as criteria in evaluating Conwell's style.

Concreteness of language is an essential for clarity. That Conwell's words were definite and specific may be seen from the following example.

How often when I go to opera houses to speak, I find in the green room behind the scenes a young lady dressed up in the highest -- or rather the lowest -- fashion. She is going to read something before the lecture, and the presiding officer goes in and announces that "Miss _____, from an Eastern school of elocution, is now going to recite Sheridan's Ride." Then the young woman, with a fan hanging at her side, her little finger sparkling with a diamond, and with a roll of paper in the other hand, comes marching out through those flies, pulling behind her, what they call a train, but it ought to be in two sections. And as she comes dragging that silk and satin over the platform, raking up the sticks and dust and bugs, she steps to the front and makes a gesture that we men don't understand, because we never struggled with a train. But

⁴³ P. 393.

you have seen it, and you will recognize what I mean. She comes dragging that behind her out to the front, and makes this gesture (swinging foot forward and backward to adjust the train).⁴⁴

Conwell's illustrations generally employ concrete language. However, in his transitions or in stating a point he hoped to establish, he was likely to use abstractions. Two sentences from "The Jolly Earthquake" demonstrate this tendency.

If a man would have a right moral influence upon the world and turn men from unrighteousness to Christ, he needs often to use that strange power that comes with a cheerful laughing spirit. How many a man with an irreligious disposition has had it laughed out of him when nothing else would do it.

Since he planned his lectures on general themes for the American public, Conwell naturally did not need technical terms. Their absence, in a negative sense, aided his clarity. Conwell's speeches included loose, periodic, and balanced sentences; but in almost every instance, clarity is as much a characteristic of his sentence structure as is variety. One short paragraph from "The Angel's Lily" contains all three types of sentences.

On that same night, twelve miles down the river, at a little hamlet called Borzar, there was a beggar. He had been a hungry beggar for years. He was greatly afflicted in body; he was restricted in food and clothing; and he slept in an enclosure without a roof. And that

⁴⁴ "The Silver Crown."

very night he went into that enclosure and lay down in his rags upon the open ground, and, looking up to the stars, prayed to the Ruler of Paradise that he might some time have the comforts and luxuries of the Caliph of Bagdad.

Conwell especially liked to use the parallel structure of the balanced sentence. "The Angel's Lily" in its entirety is a good example of this usage since the lecture is built by contrasting the extremes in several different areas. Each of the other speeches shows much parallelism. Brigance says:

. . . such a structure [the parallel] has an "amazing value." It is clear because it keeps the two ideas at hand in parallel order; it is forceful because it always weighs one thought against the other and because it can be used to ascend . . . to the ultimate climax.⁴⁵

"Vividness is the sine qua non of spoken style."⁴⁶ Brigance discusses "objective elements of vividness" in terms of six special features of style: direct discourse, epigram, analogy and antithesis, allusion, figures of speech, and illustration.⁴⁷ If these be considered criteria, Conwell's style was vivid.

Elements of direct discourse which Conwell employed are: first and second person pronouns, direct quotation, and interrogation. "Acres of Diamonds" provides

⁴⁵ Brigance, p. 237.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 218.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 240.

a good example of his use of these elements.

If you have not made any money you are carrying on your business like that, and I can tell you what you will say to me to-morrow morning when I go into your store.

I come to you and inquire: "Do you know neighbor A?"

"Oh, yes. He lives up in the next block. He trades here at my little store."

"Well, where did he come from when he came to _____?"

"I don't know."

"Does he own his own house?"

"I don't know."

"What business is he in?"

"I don't know."

"Do his children go to school?"

"I don't know."

"What ticket does he vote?"

"I don't know."

"What church does he go to?"

"I don't know, and I don't care."

Do you answer me like that to-morrow morning in your store? Then you are carrying on your business just as I carried on my father's business in Worthington, Massachusetts.

Because direct address is such a noticeable characteristic of Conwell's style, here are two additional examples. The first is from "The Silver Crown."

The time has come when a horse that now trots a mile in 2.05 or 2.06 ought to trot a

mile in fifty-five seconds Now, where are your deacons and your elders and your class leaders that you haven't a horse in Philadelphia that will run a mile in fifty-five seconds? "Oh," but says some good pious brother, "I don't pay any attention to trotting horses. I am too religious to spend time over them." Is that so? Who made the trotting horse, my friend? Who used the most picturesque language on the face of the earth, in the book of Job, to describe him? Did you ever own a trotting horse? Did you ever see that beautiful animal so well fed, so well cared for, trembling on that line with his mane shaking, his eyes flashing, his nostrils distended, and all his being alert for the leap? And did you hear the shot and see him go? If you did and didn't love him, you ought to be turned out of the church.

The second is from "The Jelly Earthquake."

Did you ever have a man visit you when you were very sick, and did he come in the front door and lift the latch so slowly or turn the knob so stealthily that you could hear only its click or turn? Did you hear him as he came into the front hall, your nervous system wrought up with fever so that you could hear everything going on downstairs? Then did you hear the man say in a whisper, "Can I go in and see him?" Then did you hear him come up the stairway on tip-toe and come to your bedroom door and swing the door slowly open with a creak? Did he step in and come up to the foot of your bed and put on an awful long face that he thinks is pious? Then did he stand at the foot of the bed and say, "O, my! you look worse than I thought! I had hoped you might get well! . . . I hope you have made yourself right with God!" -- and when he reaches the sidewalk you hear his cheerful footsteps pattering down the street. Did you ever have a man like that come to visit you when you were sick? No, you never did, or you would not be at this lecture tonight.

A number of epigrams are found in Conwell's lectures.

Some of them are: "A man can't even be pious with the

dyspepsia."⁴⁸ "If a man can foresee the millinery business, he can foresee anything under Heaven!"⁴⁹ "Then I left the law, and went into the ministry, -- left practicing entirely and went to preaching exclusively."⁵⁰ "And so I say it is not capital you want. It is not copper cents, but common sense."⁵¹

Analogy and antithesis were prominent features of Conwell's style. His use of comparison and contrast in "The Angel's Lily" has already been mentioned. A representative example from that lecture is:

But the greatest extremes I find in the fashions. I wonder if there is any man here (surely no woman) who remembers 1860? Do you remember how the ladies appeared on the street then, with those great fortresses of steel, those hoops that reached away out from the sidewalk so you could hardly get within hearing distance of a young lady then? See what a contrast there is with it now. A lady can't even step up the first step of the stairs now. Ever sweeping to the extremes!

Conwell has some allusions in his lectures; however, they are not as typical of his style as the other elements of vividness. In relating the story of Frances Willard for "Personal Glimpses," Conwell said:

Miss Willard did not move I went over and put my finger on her shoulder to

⁴⁸ "The Silver Crown."

⁴⁹ "Acres of Diamonds."

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

waken her. With startled eyes she looked up to me, with an almost wild expression, and the tears were coming down from her face and dropping on the face of the sleeping baby. When I saw that I said nothing. It was the Holy of Holies.

A statement from "The Silver Crown" is: ". . . when he assumed that crown . . . his word was absolute as the "law of the Medes and Persians." References such as these to the "Holy of Holies" and to the "law of the Medes and Persians" are representative of his allusions.

Conwell was sparing in his inclusion of figures of speech. One of the times he employed figures of speech most extensively was in this illustration from "The Silver Crown."

I went to a beautiful church in New York and the officer of the church . . . said to me, "Sir, the choir always opens the service." They did; they opened it! . . . The choir roosted on a shelf over my head. The soprano earned \$4,000 a year, and I was anxious to hear her. Soon I heard the rustle of silk up there, and one or two little giggles. Then the soprano began. She struck the lowest note her voice could possibly touch, and then began to wind, or rather, corkscrew, her way up and up and up, out of sight -- and she staid [sic] up there. Then the second bass began and wound his way down, down, down; away down to the hades of sound, and he stayed down there. Now was that music? Music! Was it worship? . . . Do you think the living God is to be worshipped by a high-flying, pyrotechnic, trapeze performance in acoustics? Neither worship nor music there.

Illustration, the last of the objective elements mentioned by Brigrance, has already been treated. It is of interest to note that in his discussion of illustrations,

Brigance quotes Conwell as an example.

The fact that Russell H. Conwell's famous lecture, "Acres of Diamonds," contained seventeen long illustrations and perhaps an equal number of shorter ones may go a long way toward explaining its amazing popularity.⁵²

The clarity and vividness of Conwell's style have now been considered. Impressiveness is the remaining quality to investigate. Woolbert makes the following suggestions about impressiveness,

Ideas are made impressive by being made to live again This reviving of the long beloved can be done in the following ways:

Recall vivid and concrete pictures of old experiences, old descriptions, old impressions of all kinds; stir up concrete mental imagery.

Recall old and lively adventures, escapades, dramatic moments, crises, incidents charged with emotion.

Quote old and reliable authorities, opinions of authors, leaders, heroes, divinities, anyone especially beloved; especially poetry and "holy writ."⁵³

Woolbert is saying essentially: (1) use concrete descriptions, (2) tell interesting illustrations, and (3) quote authorities with audience appeal. His first and second suggestions have already been considered in this section on style. Conwell's frequent reference to prominent persons was discussed in the

⁵² P. 257.

⁵³ Charles Henry Woolbert, The Fundamentals of Speech (New York: Harper and Brothers, rev. ed., 1927), p. 358.

section, "Kinds of Supporting Material."

Gray and Braden list repetition as a technique for impressiveness.⁵⁴ An example of Conwell's use of this device is in "The Angel's Lily."

He [the Caliph] was weary of giving orders to armies; he was weary of having the responsibility of imperial authority; he was weary of so much care and nicety about the table and about everything that he ate. He was weary of the beautiful carpets on which he trod; weary of having the best of everything, the most costly of everything; weary of all the wonderful ceremonies that went with his position.

Humor was an outstanding characteristic of Conwell's style. His use of anecdote gave vivacity, energy, and strength to his speaking. Several of the illustrations cited previously for other purposes are examples of his wit. Here is another, taken from "The Angel's Lily."

That salesman quoted as an illustration the case of the salesman who was arrested for murder and tried in the court. When they asked him to plead, he pleaded "Guilty," and the judge said, "Gentlemen of the jury, you do not need to go out to bring in your verdict, you hear what he said about it." Then when the jury gave their verdict as "Not guilty," the judge looked at them and said, "Did you hear him say that he was guilty?" "Yes," said the foreman, "But you can't believe a word a traveling salesman says!"

Detailed description and loaded words are two other techniques for impressiveness suggested by Gray and Braden.⁵⁵ Exalted language, employing description and loaded words,

⁵⁴ P. 448.

⁵⁵ Pp. 455-458.

tells the story of a widow in "The Jolly Earthquake."

. . . there was a young widow with two little children in the prison on the day when the earthquake came. Before the earthquake the jailer opened the door of the prison, dragged the young woman out by her hair and half carried her as her children clung to her, from boulder to boulder, from rock to rock, from ledge to ledge, from cliff to cliff, until they reached that peak from which had been thrown all the thousands of Christians through that awful persecution. When they reached the top of the highest cliff, the executioner seized hold of the little woman to throw her off that she might be dashed into pieces two hundred feet below, when suddenly he saw the volcano burst forth into awful tremors of laughter. As he released his hold on the little woman, she sank down upon her knees, lifted her hands toward the sky in prayer, with her children beside her. Thus in prayer they knelt, when there came from the depth of the ocean that awful sound of wild, fierce laughter, and the earth began to shake and the rocks to crack; the waters shot up from the sea, smoke and thunder came in the sky, and then that great earthquake came, with repeated shocks -- the first one that came under that island lifted it many feet higher, out of the sea, and every repeated throb of the earthquake lifted the island still higher, and higher, and higher, until the peak stood far up above the clouds, and as the sun was setting at eve, it threw the transfiguring rays of rainbow hues on that high rock -- and there knelt the widow and the children, transfigured in the light of the setting sun.

Summary

The theme of success runs through all the lectures. "Acres of Diamonds" and "The Silver Crown" define it in terms of material achievement and service to others. "Garibaldi" is probably in the same category. "The Jolly Earthquake" discusses laughter as a factor contributing to

success. "Personal Glimpses" includes the idea that success must be measured in terms of personal happiness rather than by wealth or fame. "The Angel's Lily" similarly concerns itself with the mean as the place where happiness may be found. These various concepts grow out of Conwell's basic tenets.

The general purpose of each lecture seems to be to stimulate. The introductions of the speeches were illustrations presenting the theme, or a statement of the speaker's purpose. Sometimes the theme is set forth specifically, but at other times it must be inferred from an illustration. Conwell used the distributive method in the discussion sections of the lectures. There was always some sort of restatement of the theme in the conclusions. Approximately half of the speeches contained a quotation from poetry following the summary.

Conwell relied almost exclusively upon illustrations for the substance of his lectures. These stories were largely drawn from his personal experience. Invariably they served the purpose of amplifying the theme. His ethical proof was established by statements showing him to be a man of character, intelligence, and good will. The major emotional appeals are to man's desire for financial success, to his wish for prestige in society, to his hope for happiness, and to his altruistic instinct for service to others.

The language of the lectures shows certain aspects

which make for clarity, vividness and impressiveness. For clarity, Conwell used concrete terms and sentence structure that was readily understood. For vividness, he employed six special features of style: direct discourse, epigram, analogy and antithesis, allusion, figures of speech, and illustration. For impressiveness, he used detailed descriptions, interesting illustrations, references to prominent personalities, repetition, humor, and loaded words.

For more than sixty years Russell H. Conwell lectured in cities and towns across the nation. He spoke with the hope that what he had to say would be of positive benefit to those who heard him. His speeches emphasized that everyone could make a success of life -- by achieving material wealth, by serving humanity, by finding happiness among one's family and friends, or by being content in the great middle class rather than seeking extremes. To put across his ideas Conwell drew extensively on illustrations from his personal experience. He appealed to the human desires for wealth, prestige and happiness. He phrased his lectures in words that were clear, vivid and impressive. What he had to say and the way in which he said it doubtless contributed to his eminence as a lecturer.

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CHAPTER FOUR

SERMONS

For the last forty-five years of his life, Russell H. Conwell was an active Baptist minister. A month and a half before his thirty-seventh birthday he was ordained and called as pastor of the Lexington Baptist Church.¹ His only other pastorate was Grace Baptist Church (Baptist Temple), whose pulpit he filled from Thanksgiving Day, 1882, until his death in 1925.² During these years he preached not only in his own church but also in churches in the towns where his lecture career led him.³ Some idea of his popularity as a preacher may be gained from noting the growth of his congregations. Burr quotes one of the Lexington church members on his ministry there:

When we heard that Colonel Conwell was coming to preach . . . we felt that we must get together an audience for him. We scoured the town to induce people to come, and succeeded in securing eighteen to attend his first service.

¹ Smith, p. 153.

² Harris, p. 3.

³ An examination of the date books, containing some of his engagements between 1900 and 1909, and of the sample tours given by his biographers reveals that he frequently filled the pulpit on Sunday in the town where he lectured Saturday.

But after that first service we did not need to do any missionary work. People came of their own account. Soon they could not be accommodated in the church and they stood outside on the pavement. Colonel Conwell is not limited for lung power, though, so they all heard him.⁴

When he was called to Philadelphia, Grace Baptist Church had a membership of "almost 300" and a building with a seating capacity of 600. "Soon, at the evening services, many could not get in, even after the seating capacity had been increased from 600 to 900."⁵ The present Baptist Temple was occupied in 1891. The auditorium seated slightly more than 3000, a figure which the church membership equalled within four years.⁶ Beginning about 1892 so many people wished to attend his services that it became necessary to issue admission tickets in advance.⁷ The "Foreword" to one of his published sermon collections describes his audiences:

Upon a recent Sunday evening, Japan, Korea, and several European countries were represented,

⁴ Burr, pp. 176-176.

⁵ "The History of Temple," un-dated pamphlet issued by the Historical Committee of Grace Baptist Church, p. 3.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ "Stoned for Good Works," a sermon preached January 7, 1900, and published in The True Philadelphian, V, 247-252, is Conwell's complaint at the church property being placed on the tax list. The taking of tickets at the door, which he says has been going on for eight years, is one of the bases for the government's case.

as well as Texas, Oklahoma, Mississippi, North Dakota, and many near-by states. At the communion services, almost all denominations are present. At one such service were members of the Reformed, Presbyterian, Moravian, Christian, Episcopalian, Congregational, Methodist, Evangelical, and Lutheran churches, together with Friends and Hebrews.⁸

What manner of preacher was Conwell? What was the nature of his sermons which attracted so many auditors? This chapter seeks an answer to these questions by investigating (1) the themes on which he spoke, (2) the forms his sermons took, (3) the kinds of supporting material he used, and (4) his use of language or style.

Sermon Themes

Over twelve hundred of Conwell's sermons were read to discover the themes he liked to emphasize. There seem to be four general categories which serve as a means of classifying his topics. These are: Christianity and personal living; doctrinal questions; the Christian attitude toward social problems and current events; and miscellaneous subjects too varied for further classification.

Christianity and personal living. Perhaps the favorite of Dr. Conwell's themes was the application of Christianity to personal living. He frequently spoke on the

⁸Fields of Glory, p. 5.

power of God to transform the life of the individual and on the merits of Christian virtues in everyday life. He emphasized service and responsibility, bringing up children in a Christian environment, the proper observance of the Sabbath, and God's care for the individual as he faced the daily problems of life.

An example of a sermon on the transforming power of God is "Turned to the Flame,"⁹ in which Dr. Conwell pictures Moses as an exile and criminal whose life was changed when he turned to God at the flaming bush. Several historical examples are given; and then he concludes, "Turn unto me, obey my commandments, and the course that has hitherto been that of sorrow, disgrace, and shame, shall hereafter be one of joy, and peace, and everlasting salvation." "Pure Water"¹⁰ declares that God alone can purify the sinful life. Similar to these is "Nothing But Slag,"¹¹ which ends with the sentence, "If a man would have the spirit of God to recover from a wasted life that which will mean the highest success, he needs the very spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, and I urge upon you that first step toward recovery, toward using the

⁹ The Temple Magazine, Vol. III, No. 8, pp. 1-13. (Preached June 21, 1891.)

¹¹ Borrowed Axes, pp. 73-94. This is one of Dr. Conwell's most popular sermons and is also published in: The True Philadelphian, I, 683-689; and The Temple Review, VIII, 373-380, and XVIII, 3-5, 7. (First preached February 7, 1897.)
True Philadelphian, I, 683-689; and The Temple Review, VIII, 373-380, and XVIII, 3-5, 7. (First preached February 7, 1897.)

wasted life, is that you go into partnership at once with the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ."

"How Shall Godliness Be Infused into Daily Life?"¹² is the title of a sermon, preached July 21, 1895. This title might well serve as a theme for the many sermons which Conwell preached on practicing Christianity in one's daily professional life. More specific, perhaps, are "Religion in Business" and "Business Competition,"¹³ or "A Christian Doctor."¹⁴ Typical of all three is the conclusion of the latter: "The lesson . . . is that when a man is converted unto God, let him not think he is going to be elevated out of the trade or profession he occupies at once; but that he at once is to change the spiritual purpose and motive of his life and work for God, no longer for himself."¹⁵ Honesty in financial and other dealings is emphasized in such sermons as "Godly Expense Account,"¹⁶ "New Year and Debt,"¹⁷ and

¹² The Temple Magazine, VII, 368-369.

¹³ Ibid., VI, 243-245. (Preached May 13, 1894.)

¹⁴ The True Philadelphian, I, 71-78. (Preached October 10, 1897.)

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 78.

¹⁶ Ibid., III, 517-521. (Preached February 5, 1899.)

¹⁷ Sermons for the Great Days of the Year, pp. 9-21. Also recorded in The Temple Review, Vol. XXIV, No. 1, pp. 3-6. (Preached December 12, 1915.)

"Borrowed Axes."¹⁸ In the first of these the preacher declares that God will hold the individual responsible for the way he spends his money and that therefore one should make his investments carefully. The second concludes with the statement:

Let not the sun go down on any debt that you can pay, and let not the New Year come on with any bill unpaid which you can pay, and with all things, pay your debt to God; pay it with humility, pay it with repentance, pay it with prayer, pay it with love for God and love for mankind, and begin the New Year square with mankind and square with God.

The third sets forth the idea that it is a form of sin to borrow another man's property without giving him credit and that the offering of another's possessions to God is not acceptable. "Employees"¹⁹ points out that "every contract with man must be made and kept always subject to God's higher law."

Another aspect of personal living which Conwell stressed was service to humanity. In "Choosing the Soil"²⁰ the speaker develops the idea that it is important to find the right place to plant your life and suggests that the "right place" is where you can be of most good for humanity.

¹⁸ Borrowed Axes, pp. 1-12. Also recorded in The True Philadelphian, V, 63-67. (Preached October 15, 1899.)

¹⁹ The Temple Review, IX, 419-422. (Preached January 12, 1902.)

²⁰ The Temple Pulpit, Vol. I, Nos. 13 and 14. (Preached December 28, 1924.)

"The Principal Motive"²¹ is service to Christ. "Go Forward"²² describes the present program of the church and visualizes what would be possible if all members took advantage of their opportunities for service. "Thanksgiving Sacrifice"²³ declares that before we have a right to feast we must sacrifice or bring service to the Lord. The pastor says his people spend too much time preparing and not acting; he even goes so far as to state that the Christian Endeavor Society has been preparing itself five years and to wonder why it does not do some actual Christian work. "Christ Healing the Sick"²⁴ suggests as a modern application medical missionaries and the work of Garretson and Samaritan hospitals, which the Grace church supports. "Power Brings Duty"²⁵ and "Obligations Follow Power"²⁶ imply the responsibility of the successful person to help those less fortunate.

²¹ The Temple Magazine, VII, 295-297. (Preached June 16, 1895.)

²² Sermons for the Great Days of the Year, pp. 189-197. Also recorded in The Temple Magazine, VII, 439-441. (Preached September 8, 1895.)

²³ Ibid., pp. 198-212. Also recorded in The Temple Magazine, VII, 571-573. (Preached November 24, 1895.)

²⁴ The Temple Review, Vol. XXIX, No. 45, pp. 1, 3, 5, 7-8. (Preached December 11, 1921.)

²⁵ Ibid., Vol. XXIV, No. 28, pp. 3-6, 8-9. (Preached November 7, 1915.)

²⁶ Ibid., VIII, 357-362. (Preached August 18, 1901.)

Home life is another area of personal living which received Conwell's attention. He discusses the responsibility of the parent to provide the child with spiritual as well as physical food in "Dismissed without Provisions."²⁷ "A Change of Character"²⁸ stresses the importance of the right environment and good associates for a proper life.

Several of these ideas are combined in "A Holy Day."²⁹ Dr. Conwell believes that the observance of Sunday should be in spirit and not in rule and regulation. He pictures the improved family relationships which come when the parents take time to play with, talk to, or read to their children. Feeding the poor and working in Sunday School missions are two other activities he considers appropriate to the day.

Another idea he liked to emphasize was God's personal care. He preached messages to comfort his congregation as they faced personal problems. In "Attracting God's Attention"³⁰ he declares that the ears of God "are ever open to the cry of the needy." "Comfort"³¹ and

²⁷ The Temple Pulpit, Vol. I, No. 1, pp. 1-16.
(Preached September 15, 1889.)

²⁸ The Temple Magazine, Vol. III, No. 29, pp. 1-13. (Preached November 15, 1891.)

²⁹ Acres of Diamonds, pp. 56-64.

³⁰ The Temple Pulpit, Vol. I, No. 6, pp. 2-11.
(Preached November 17, 1889.)

³¹ The Temple Review, Vol. XXII, No. 43, pp. 3-6.
(Preached September 13, 1914.)

"Realizing God's Care"³² are other sermons on the same idea.

Doctrinal questions. A second type of theme is that of doctrinal questions. Some of these, such as his sermons on prayer and faith were at times closely related to Christianity in daily living. The evangelistic sermons were also by nature personal. Conwell preached rather infrequently on the nature of the Baptist church as distinct from other Christian groups. He rarely devoted an entire sermon to such doctrines as tithing, sanctification and justification. He expressed the ideal of cooperation among churches.

His sermons on prayer were never abstract theological discussions but were concerned with the practical uses to which prayer could be put. "Consistent Prayer,"³³ "How to Pray,"³⁴ and "The Limits of Prayer"³⁵ are examples. "Life's Gethsemanes"³⁶ portrays God as one who will strengthen those who pray to him; if he does not remove the burden about which one prays, he will give grace and strength

³² The Temple Pulpit, Vol. I, No. 5. (Preached November 16, 1924.)

³³ The Temple Magazine, V, 291-293. (Preached June 4, 1893.)

³⁴ The Temple Review, Vol. XII, No. 17, pp. 3-5. (Preached January 17, 1904.)

³⁵ Ibid., Vol. XXIX, No. 3, pp. 1, 3, 4, 7. (Preached December 26, 1920.)

³⁶ The Temple Magazine, Vol. VIII, Part 1, pp. 243-245. (Preached May 10, 1896.)

sufficient to bear it. The "Keys to Heaven,"³⁷ although not exclusively on prayer, closes with an admonition to pray: "Let us then turn to God, and ask Him to give us strength, courage and perseverance and good judgment to use only the key which will unlock the Heavenly rooms."

"A Mustard Seed Faith"³⁸ maintains that personal faith is a growing, evolving matter, which begins as a tiny thing and then may develop into a powerful force. In "Faith that Never Fails"³⁹ the speaker takes as his text "Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith" and gives his interpretation that Christ promises us an initial impulse toward faith and that if we accept and believe on him, regardless of life's vicissitudes, we can count on him to finish the work he has begun. Other sermons concerned especially with faith are "Righteousness by Faith"⁴⁰ and "Faith."⁴¹

³⁷ The Temple Pulpit, Vol. I, No. 5, pp. 2-15.
(Preached May 10, 1896.)

³⁸ The Temple Pulpit, Vol. I, No. 26. (Preached March 22, 1925.)

³⁹ Ibid., No. 30. (Preaching date not given.)

⁴⁰ The True Philadelphian, III, 3-7. (Preached October 2, 1898.)

⁴¹ The Temple Review, Vol. XVII, No. 33, pp. 3-4.
(Preached March 19, 1909.)

Another doctrinal topic is evangelism. In "The Mission of the Church" Dr. Conwell states clearly his belief that the primary function of the church is to win the lost:

The mission of a church is to save the souls of men The church's only thought should be to save the souls of men; and the moment any church admits a singer who does not sing to save souls; the moment a church calls a preacher who does not preach to save souls; the moment a church elects a deacon who does not work to save souls; the moment a church gives a supper or an entertainment of any kind, not for the purpose of saving souls; it ceases in so much to be a church and to fulfill the magnificent mission God gave it. Every concert, every choir service, every Lord's Supper, every agency that is used in the church, must have the great mission of the church plainly before its eye. We are here to save the souls of dying sinners; we are here for no other purpose; and the mission of the church being so clear, that is the only test of a real church.

"The World's Needs"⁴² cites the sacred books of "Hindoo [sic], Brahmin, Chinese, Roman, Greek, Norseman, and Icelfander" as representing the yearning of humanity for an ideal righteousness and then preaches Christ as the one "alone [who] can satisfy the cravings of a soul after God." "The Best Gift,"⁴³ a New Year's Day sermon, wishes for the congregation the "best thing," "the joyful assurance of your salvation." Similarly, "The Highest Joy" is described as the sense of God's unchangeable love, and of his salvation,

⁴² The Temple Pulpit, Vol. II, No. 14, pp. 3-11. (Preached November 2, 1890.)

⁴³ Ibid., No. 18, pp. 3-8. (Preached January 4, 1891.)

which comes freely to every person who accepts Jesus. "The Books Opened"⁴⁴ introduces the thought that all we do of good and of evil is recorded; the work of Christ is to pay our debts, and "whosoever would confess their sins unto Him and tell Him sincerely their story, and ask Him to pay their debt, He will pay it, and allow them to begin a new clean page in the ledgers, both on earth and in heaven." This same thought is expressed in "Is Death Annihilation?;" herein the speaker declares: "We hold consistently to the belief that the wicked shall go to eternal punishment and that the righteous shall inherit Life Everlasting." "Caiaphas and Dreyfus"⁴⁵ contrasts the lives of those two, then asks:

With whom do you and I stand? With whom will we always stand? With Christ, who gave himself for others; or with Caiaphas, who was willing to slay the innocent, with a hope of personal gain for himself or his nation?

Repent, be baptized and receive the Holy Spirit is the message of "Baptism by Water and Spirit."⁴⁶ "A Sure Promise"⁴⁷

⁴⁴ The Temple Magazine, Vol. III, No. 22, pp. 1-8. (Preached September 27, 1891.)

⁴⁵ The True Philadelphian, IV, 411-417. (Preached July 9, 1899.)

⁴⁶ The Temple Magazine, VII, 271-272. (Date of preaching not stated.)

⁴⁷ Fields of Glory, pp. 104-116.

and "Does Your Anchor Hold?"⁴⁸

In addition to his evangelistic appeals to the unsaved, Dr. Conwell continually urged the members of his congregation to become soul-winners. He states:

How shall we reach the masses? Only in the good old-fashioned way -- the only way that hath existed since nature began -- of showing them the Divine Son of God in His simplicity, in His loving kindness, as a Saviour; whose power exists now, did exist in the eternal past, and will be a strong power in all the eternal future.⁴⁹

"How to Bring Souls to Christ"⁵⁰ advises the Christian to tell of his own conversion experience; he should "talk of simple every-day things in life and tell them it is really better in business, it is better in social life, it is better at home, it is better everywhere, to be an open clear Christian, known and read of all men." "Wanted -- Reapers"⁵¹ questions what sowing there is in the various activities of the church if there is no reaping in the form of the saving of souls. The greatest happiness of the Christian is in showing others "Heaven's Open Door,"⁵²

⁴⁸ Borrowed Axes, pp. 66-74. Also recorded in The Temple Magazine, Vol. VIII, Part 2, pp. 238-242. (Preached November 1, 1896.)

⁴⁹ "Reaching the Masses," The Temple Magazine, Vol. III, No. 13, pp. 1-14. (Preached May 24, 1891.)

⁵⁰ The Temple Pulpit, Vol. II, No. 3, pp. 15-24. (Preached January 12, 1890.)

⁵¹ The Temple Magazine, Vol. VIII, Part 2, pp. 265-268. (Preached November 8, 1896.)

⁵² Acres of Diamonds, pp. 83-88.

The preacher declares:

Oh, Christian, would you taste of bliss unspeakable, and find heaven here below? Plead with some loved one to stand beside you, or kneel with you, and urge him to call for Jesus with repentant heart. Then shall you catch the shadows of loved forms as they pass and re-pass the windows of heaven, and your waiting shall be rewarded with the sight of the open door, and the long-unseen faces radiant within, -- a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Dr. Conwell rarely spoke on Baptist doctrine. In a Sunday afternoon "practical talk" on "The Baptist Principles,"⁵³ he states that he is speaking by special request on the primary principles of the Baptist faith and that he would not take time at a regular service to discuss such a completely sectarian question. He then proceeds to give a fairly orthodox outline of the Baptist position.⁵⁴ In answer to an article in The Forum by the "Rev. Mr. Hale of Middlebore, Massachusetts," Conwell preached a sermon entitled "The Baptist Church."⁵⁵

⁵³ The Temple Magazine, Vol. III, No. 15, pp. 1-10. (Delivered August 2, 1891.)

⁵⁴ He states the two foundations of Baptist faith: (1) that the Bible is the word of God, the only rule of faith, and that no human creed should ever come between the Bible and the conscience; and (2) that every intelligent human being has a conscience, which is the voice of God, to guide him in the interpretation of the Bible. Then he names baptism and the Lord's Supper as the two church ordinances. He explains why Baptists believe in close communion, why they do not practice infant baptism, and why they require baptism by immersion. He emphasizes the equality of all members of the church, and states that the congregation dictates to the preacher, deacons, and trustees.

⁵⁵ The Temple Magazine, VII, 151-153, 155. (Preached March 10, 1895.)

The theme is that with holiness any man can see the Lord regardless of his church membership. He cites scripture to establish that holiness can be obtained by independent thinking. There is also some discussion as to which method of church administration leads with the greatest speed and certainty to holiness. "How the Baptist Denomination Should Work"⁵⁶ was delivered at a joint service on the anniversary of a city mission program. The chief emphasis was on cooperative programs. A later sermon on beliefs held by Northern Baptist churches is "The Baptists,"⁵⁷ preached March 15, 1914. "True Worship"⁵⁸ traces the origin and history of Baptists and points out some of the differences between Catholic and Baptist beliefs. It is not narrowly sectarian, however, for the preacher states:

Universal toleration of every man and every man's conscience, and permitting each man to decide for himself all questions of creed, has been one of the Baptist principles from the time of the apostles until now. God bless every denomination that is helpful to Christians, but God speed the day when all of us will be agreed concerning the best way and the best forms of worshipping God in Spirit and in truth.

Conwell strongly endorsed cooperation between Baptist and other religious groups as well as cooperation

⁵⁶ Ibid., VI, 575-576. (Preached November 8, 1894.)

⁵⁷ The Temple Review, Vol. XXII, No. 33, pp. 3-8.

⁵⁸ The True Philadelphian, II, 439-443. (The day on which the sermon was preached is not cited, but the year is given as 1887.)

among various Baptist churches. A sermon on "Decrease in Church Influence" drew a parallel between current conditions and those of the first century when Peter was in prison and Herod on the throne, then concluded:

. . . wherever there is a church on earth, from the Salvation Army in its work and the Volunteers in their work, to the most complicated, most high and aristocratic church on earth, wherever there is a church that teaches Christian principles, that church is identified with your own prosperity, your own progress, your own happiness in life, your own eternal salvation. Help it, encourage it, say all you can for it. Because if the church now fails, civilization fails, and oppression and tyranny take the place of our liberty and our progress.

"The American Church"⁵⁹ consists chiefly of a listing of the many different churches and their divisions which may be found in the United States. With little specific evidence or reasoning to back up his statement, the speaker then prophesies: "The time is very rapidly approaching when all these denominations shall unite in saying, 'Lo, here is Christ!'" "Federation of Churches"⁶⁰ points out a number of things which the various denominations have in common and declares, "We must learn then that in this federation each denomination will be strengthened."

Examples of other sermons on doctrinal topics are:

⁵⁹ The Temple Review, VII, 229-235. (Preached June 9, 1901.)

⁶⁰ Ibid., Vol. XIV, No. 7, pp. 3-5. (Preached November 5, 1905.)

"What Is Hell?" "What Is Heaven?" "Once a Christian Always One,"⁶¹ "Christ's Sabbath,"⁶² "Sanctification and Justification,"⁶³ and "Tithing."⁶⁴

The Christian attitude toward social problems and current events. A third type of theme, in addition to Christianity in personal living and to doctrinal questions, is concerned with social problems, current events, and the Christian's attitude toward them.

As might be expected, Dr. Conwell liked to point out the existence of certain problems in society in a general sort of way and then challenge his congregation to find solutions. "A Present Need" cites those who break the Sabbath with Sunday games, evil literature, dishonest and unprincipled public officials, and "the encroaching corporations of the day, that are robbing the poor man of his earnings, taking away from the people their individual rights"; then it concludes that the world's present and permanent need is "the great Gideons, the blessed Gideons, the patriotic Gideons, the God-loving Gideons," who will

⁶¹ The Temple Review, VII, 503-509. (Preached March 3, 1901.)

⁶² Ibid., Vol. XI, No. 52, pp. 3-5. (Preached September 20, 1903.)

⁶³ Ibid., Vol. XVII, No. 5, pp. 3-5. (Preached October 11, 1908.)

⁶⁴ Ibid., Vol. XXVIII, No. 17, pp. 1, 3-5. (Preached February 22, 1920.)

meet existing problems. In a similar vein is the climax of "A Godly Man."

Are there slums in Philadelphia? Establish a mission among them. Are there poor? Then establish some method for the supply of the necessities of the poor. Are there drunkards? Begin some institution that shall carry on their reform. Are there thieves? . . . criminals . . . any need of mankind? . . . It is a noble thing to have all these other traits of a Christian character but the grandest and sublimest thing is to be a godly man, a man like God, who issues His creative fiat and sets into combination forces that shall go on blessing man forever.⁶⁵

"Called to Be an Apostle"⁶⁶ declares that a hundred people of the congregation are home with typhoid because the city failed to build a needed aqueduct; it then proceeds to point out other city flaws such as unjust laws, "slums full of ragged poor," and saloons that are "dens of infamy and vice"; the example of Parkhurst in cleaning up New York City is cited, and then there is the appeal, "Ye are called to be an apostle." "Christ's Hand,"⁶⁷ preached on a special day of prayer for consumptives, stresses that slums and the bad milk supply are the direct responsibility of the congregation. There were several occasions when Conwell preached on the relationship of the church to politics. One of these,

⁶⁵ The Temple Magazine, Vol. III, No. 6, pp. 1-11. (Preached June 7, 1891.)

⁶⁶ The True Philadelphian, I, 617-624. (Preached February 6, 1898.)

⁶⁷ The Temple Review, Vol. XX, No. 45, pp. 3-6. (Preached April 28, 1912.)

"Political Problems,"⁶⁸ lists such things as prohibition in the primaries, the relationship of capital and labor, race relations (he had just returned from a lecture tour through the South), and then suggests:

I have . . . brought to you . . . these few things out of the many things that require re-adjustment Let us not forget to sincerely pray to the God of heaven that He will lead us, that we may re-adjust our political affairs, that we may all work together with harmony and brotherly affection toward the great end of the highest possible good of the greatest number of people.

One previously mentioned, "The Church and Politics," states that while the church has an interest in the welfare of the poor, the elimination of white slavery, and the reduction of crime, the duty of the church is to change the souls of sinners and not to array itself in politics. A third, also entitled "The Church and Politics,"⁶⁹ asserts that as election time draws near the mission of the church is to teach and to awaken the people to thought but that the church has no right "to protrude itself in force" in the election issues.

Sometimes an entire sermon was devoted to a specific city problem. "The Strike" is an example. The speaker believes that the people of the city felt that the employees

⁶⁸ The Temple Magazine, VII, 3-4, 7. (Preached Thanksgiving morning, November 29, 1894.)

⁶⁹ The Temple Review, Vol. XXIII, No. 43, pp. 3-6. (Preached October 3, 1918.)

of the street railway deserved higher wages, but he condemns the workers for forgetting the people's interests and dependence upon the railway for city transportation. He calls for the establishing of compulsory arbitration, which the working men are willing to accept, not merely to settle the present strike but as a permanent city policy. "The Trolley Strike," preached twelve years later, emphasizes that working men have the right to bargain with a corporation but insists that they should remember the "child," the people of the city. When Police Officer Shelley lost his life in the line of duty, Conwell preached a special memorial service in his honor.⁷⁰ A similar sermon was "The Murder of Policemen,"⁷¹ preached in 1921 when policeman Hanley was killed. "Public Amusements"⁷² calls for the city to buy a suitable "public place of entertainment where the young people can safely go, and where the moral and religious people of the city will go." When there was a controversy between the Protestants and the Catholics over reading the Bible in the public schools, Dr. Conwell

⁷⁰ "Gave His Life for His Friends," The Temple Review, Vol. XVII, No. 24, pp. 3-5. (Preached November 29, 1908.)

⁷¹ The Temple Review, Vol. XXIX, No. 43, pp. 1, 3, 5, 7. (Preached November 27, 1921.)

⁷² Ibid., Vol. XXI, No. 13, pp. 3-5. (Preached December 22, 1912.)

spoke out in favor of Bible reading.⁷³

Divorce was a problem upon which Dr. Conwell preached several times. He considered the absence of love between man and wife cause for divorce. To his way of thinking such a marriage had been contracted in error and it was adultery for the two to go on living together where there was no love.⁷⁴

You cannot divorce persons whose hearts are true when they are married. We talk about legal divorce, but that applies only to the outward ceremonies and the outward forms. The real marriage, given of God, I don't believe can be broken.⁷⁵

Upon another occasion he said, "The reason for divorce can only exist in the fact that two people who have lived together as though married were not really married in the sight of God."⁷⁶ He felt that the reason for twenty-one out of twenty-five divorces was that marriage was not regarded with sufficient sacredness.⁷⁷ Upon several

⁷³ "The Bible in the Schools," The Temple Review, Vol. XIX, No. 51, pp. 1-3. (Preached June 4, 1911.)

⁷⁴ "Marriage and Divorce," ibid., Vol. XII, No. 33, pp. 3-5, 11-12. (Preached May 8, 1904.)

⁷⁵ "Divorce," ibid., Vol. XX, No. 7, pp. 1-3. (Preached October 29, 1911.)

⁷⁶ "Marriage and the Angels," ibid., Vol. XXIX, No. 16, pp. 1-3, 7-8. (Preached April 3, 1921.)

⁷⁷ "Whom to Marry," ibid., Vol. XX, No. 6, pp. 1-3. (Preached October 22, 1911.)

occasions⁷⁸ he advocated a uniform divorce law for the nation although he did not go into detail as to its provisions.

Foreign relations of the United States were another type of current event on which Dr. Conwell frequently preached. For example, just before the Spanish-American War he preached "Escape from Cuba,"⁷⁹ lauding the exploits of Miss Cisneros and complimenting the church on passing a resolution favoring her release. About a month later a reception was held for her at the Temple. He was abroad when war actually came, but he wrote home from France, "If ever in human history there was a war entered upon for brotherly love and charity, it is this one, on the part of the United States."⁸⁰ Upon his return he preached upon "America's Danger,"⁸¹ which was a warning against imperialism and a demand that Cuba, the Philippines and Porto Rico govern themselves. "Thanksgiving for Victories,"⁸² preached the last day of July, 1898, gave

⁷⁸ Special references are "Marriage and Divorce" and "Divorce" supra.

⁷⁹ The True Philadelphian, I, 103-111. (Preached October 17, 1897.)

⁸⁰ Ibid., II, 231-232. (Letter dated May 12, 1898.)

⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 347-354. (Preached June 19, 1898.)

⁸² Ibid., pp. 523-527. (Preached July 31, 1898.)

credit to American soldiers and sailors for their accomplishments, raised the question of what to do with conquered territory, then concluded:

Great are the victories of this campaign. But let us not in our pride, nor in our confidence, nor in our rejoicing over it, fail to remember that we still need the close guiding hand of Divine wisdom in order that the fruits of the campaign may be gathered as they ought, God worshipped as He should be, and mankind blessed as we wish them to be.

In later sermons, he declared that Americans should take Christ as well as commerce to the lands taken from Spain, and called again for the United States to give up its conqueror's role by setting these territories free.⁸³ Five days after the military occupation of Cuba ended, Conwell preached a sermon commending giving Cuba freedom but suggesting that she might have more liberty as a state in the Union.⁸⁴

World War I⁸⁵ and the founding of the League of

⁸³ "Christ's Choice," The True Philadelphian, III, 703-710. (Preached March 26, 1899.) "Freedom that is Slavery," The Temple Review, IX, 479-484. (Preached February 23, 1902.)

⁸⁴ "Cut Down Your Wants," The Temple Review, Vol. X, No. 9, pp. 3-6. (Preached May 25, 1902.)

⁸⁵ "A Belgian's Eternity," ibid., Vol. XXII, No. 40, pp. 3-7. (Preached September 13, 1914.) "Prayer for Peace," ibid., No. 44, pp. 3-7. (Preached October 4, 1914.) "Cathedral at Rheims," ibid., No. 46, pp. 3-8. (Preached September 27, 1914.) "Using the Enemy's Powder," ibid., No. 51, pp. 3-6. (Preached November 8, 1914.) "American Victims [aboard the Lusitania]," ibid., Vol. XXIII, No. 22, pp. 3-7. (Preached May 9, 1915.) "Memorial Day," ibid., (Cont'd.)

Nations⁸⁶ were other international problems which served as sermon themes.

There were various other current events of national or international scope on which he spoke. The inauguration of President McKinley and his assassination provided subject matter for two sermons.⁸⁷ When Queen Victoria died, Conwell preached a eulogy, at the conclusion of which the audience reverently stood with bowed heads while the organist played "The Dead March" from Saul.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ (Cont'd.) No. 33, pp. 3-7, 12-13. (Preached May 30, 1915.) "The War!" ibid., Vol. XXV, No. 6, pp. 3-8. (Preached February 4, 1917.) "Armageddon," ibid., No. 18, pp. 3-6. (Preached April 15, 1917.) "Patriotic Hearts," ibid., No. 39, pp. 3-7, 10. (Preached October 28, 1917.) "Edith Cavell," ibid., No. 42, pp. 3-6. (Preached October 14, 1917.) "German Indemnity," ibid., No. 43, pp. 3-6, 10-11, 14. (Preached November 25, 1917.) "War Is War," ibid., Vol. XXVI, No. 6, pp. 3-6. (Preached December 30, 1917.)

⁸⁶ "Memorial Day," "The War," and "Armageddon," mentioned above, express the speaker's hope and belief that an international supreme court and parliament of nations will be established as a result of the war. Sermons devoted exclusively to some phase of the league idea are: "Religion in the League of Nations," ibid., Vol. XXVIII, No. 42, pp. 1, 3-5, 7, 12-13, (preached October 24, 1920); "Jerusalem Will Be the Capitol of the World," ibid., Vol. XXIX, No. 32, pp. 1, 3-5, 7-8, (preached September 11, 1921); "A Prophecy and Muscle Shoals," ibid., Vol. XXX, No. 13, pp. 1, 3-5, (preached January 29, 1922); "An Unfair Partnership," ibid., Vol. XXXI, No. 32, pp. 1, 3-5, 8, 13, (preached September 16, 1923); and "The World's Thanksgiving Day," The Temple Pulpit, Vol. I, No. 10, (preached November 27, 1924).

⁸⁷ "God's Care of the Nation," The Temple Review, VII, 523-530, (preached March 3, 1901); and "Responsibility for Belief," ibid., VIII, 421-426, (preached September 15, 1901).

⁸⁸ "Queen Victoria," ibid., VII, 391-397. (Preached January 17, 1901.)

The coronation of Edward VII of England was the theme for another sermon.⁸⁹ Aid and sympathy for Armenia,⁹⁰ Albania,⁹¹ and Montenegro⁹² in their respective struggles for freedom were urged. At the close of a sermon on Montenegro the congregation wired King Nicolas, expressing admiration and sympathy; the King telegraphed his appreciation of their good wishes. Persecution of the Jews in Russia,⁹³ an earthquake in California,⁹⁴ and the selection of Lloyd George as Prime Minister of England⁹⁵ all served as topics for sermons. Other subjects included: the lynching of a Negro in Wilmington, Delaware;⁹⁶ the problems arising from Negro migration from the South to the North;⁹⁷ government ownership

⁸⁹ "England's Coronation," *ibid.*, Vol. X, No. 13, pp. 3-7. (Preached June 22, 1902.)

⁹⁰ "Armenia," *ibid.*, Vol. VIII, Part I, pp. 111-113. (Preached March 1, 1896.)

⁹¹ "Come Over and Help Us," *ibid.*, Vol. XIV, No. 20, pp. 3-5. (Preached February 4, 1906.)

⁹² "Help the Montenegrins," *ibid.*, Vol. XXI, No. 25, pp. 3-6, 11, (preached April 13, 1913); and "All Nature Aids the Righteous," *ibid.*, No. 29, pp. 3-5, (preached April 27, 1913).

⁹³ "The Jews in Russia," *ibid.*, Vol. XIV, No. 9, pp. 3-5. (Preached November 19, 1905.)

⁹⁴ "Remarks on the Earthquake," *ibid.*, No. 31, pp. 3-5. (Preached April 22, 1906.)

⁹⁵ "A Protestant Prime Minister," *ibid.*, Vol. XXV, No. 4, pp. 3-5, 16. (Preached December 10, 1916.)

⁹⁶ "The Wilmington Mob," *ibid.*, Vol. XI, No. 40, pp. 3-5, 8. (Preached June 28, 1903.)

⁹⁷ "Colored Imigration [sic]," *ibid.*, Vol. XXXI, No. 40, pp. 1, 3-4, 7-8. (Preached October 7, 1923.)

of the railroads;⁹⁸ the political duties and responsibilities of women, who had just received the right to vote;⁹⁹ a consideration of dominion status for Ireland;¹⁰⁰ and a prophecy of the day when to the miracle of radio would be added a visual element.¹⁰¹

Miscellaneous topics. In addition to these three general themes -- Christianity in daily living, doctrinal questions, and the significance of social problems and current events -- Dr. Conwell spoke on many other miscellaneous subjects. Almost yearly there were appropriate Christmas, Thanksgiving, Easter, harvest, and New Year's Day sermons. He was a popular commencement speaker and delivered baccalaureate addresses to such diverse groups as the graduates of the Neff College of Oratory,¹⁰² the senior class of Central High School,¹⁰³ those finishing the Philadelphia

⁹⁸ "Government Ownership of the Railroads," ibid., Vol. XXVI, No. 5, pp. 3-5. (Preached Thanksgiving Day, 1916, during the railroad strike.)

⁹⁹ "Women at Elections," ibid., Vol. XXVIII, No. 35, pp. 1, 3-5. (Preached September 26, 1920.)

¹⁰⁰ "The Real Irish Question," ibid., Vol. XXX, No. 5, pp. 1, 3-8. (Preached January 15, 1922.)

¹⁰¹ "Radio Seeings," ibid., Vol. XXXI, No. 3, pp. 1, 3-4. (Preached January 7, 1923.)

¹⁰² "Words Alive."

¹⁰³ "Graduation Thoughts," The Temple Review, Vol. XXVI, No. 27, pp. 3-6. (Preached June 23, 1918.) Also recorded in Sermons for the Great Days of the Year, pp. 144-157.

College of Osteopathy,¹⁰⁴ and his own Temple graduates.¹⁰⁵

Another miscellaneous theme was amusements. The sermon, "Church and Amusements,"¹⁰⁶ preached in 1890, declares that once music, the dance, the theatre, the printing press, sports, and schools were within the boundary of the church and that they should be reclaimed. "Amusements,"¹⁰⁷ preached fourteen years later, says that cards, dancing, and the theatre are not evil in themselves but should be avoided if they bring one into association with evil. In 1912, Conwell called for the city of Philadelphia to provide a youth recreation center.¹⁰⁸

Music was a favorite theme. The following titles are suggestive of the sermons he preached: "How Music Saves,"¹⁰⁹ "God Inspired Music" (on the sacred music of Mendelssohn),¹¹⁰ "Usefulness of Music,"¹¹¹ "Music in

¹⁰⁴ "No Sect in Medicine," The Temple Review, Vol. XXX, No. 25, pp. 1, 3-6. (Preached June 3, 1923.)

¹⁰⁵ "Take the Old with You," The True Philadelphian, II, 315-321. (Preached June 12, 1898.)

¹⁰⁶ The Temple Pulpit, Vol. II, No. 12, pp. 2-9. (Preached October 5, 1890.)

¹⁰⁷ The Temple Review, Vol. XII, No. 36, pp. 3-5. (Preached May 22, 1904.)

¹⁰⁸ "Public Amusements."

¹⁰⁹ The Temple Magazine, VII, 547-549. (Preached November 10, 1895.)

¹¹⁰ The True Philadelphian, I, 5-13. (Preached September 26, 1897.)

¹¹¹ Ibid., V, 462-468. (Preached March 18, 1900.)

Religious Worship,"¹¹² "Truthful Music" (the life of Handel),¹¹³
 "Mendelssohn and His Music,"¹¹⁴ "The Messages of Music,"¹¹⁵
 "Healing Uses of Music,"¹¹⁶ "Music in the Home,"¹¹⁷ "The Origin
 of Oratorios,"¹¹⁸ "Music and Dyspepsia,"¹¹⁹ "God's Orches-
 tra,"¹²⁰ "Fannie Crosby,"¹²¹ and "One Sweetly Solemn Thought"
 (on Alice Carey).¹²²

Thus, a four-fold classification of the themes used
 by Dr. Conwell in his sermons is: (1) application of

¹¹² The Temple Review, VI, 31-36. (Preached
 March 25, 1900.)

¹¹³ Ibid., IX, 87-94. (Preached October 27, 1901.)

¹¹⁴ Ibid., Vol. XI, No. 25, pp. 3-6, 9-10.
 (Preached March 8, 1903.)

¹¹⁵ Ibid., Vol. XVII, No. 30, pp. 3-5. (Preached
 February 26, 1909.)

¹¹⁶ Ibid., Vol. XIX, No. 1, pp. 1-3, 8.
 (Preached September 25, 1910.)

¹¹⁷ Ibid., No. 3, pp. 1-3. (Preached October 9,
 1910.)

¹¹⁸ Ibid., No. 6, pp. 3-5. (Preached October 23,
 1910.)

¹¹⁹ Ibid., No. 33, pp. 1-3. (Preached April 16, 1911.)

¹²⁰ Ibid., Vol. XXIII, No. 21, pp. 3-5, 15.
 (Preached February 14, 1915.)

¹²¹ Ibid., Vol. XXVIII, No. 16, pp. 1, 3-4.
 (Preached March 21, 1920.)

¹²² Ibid., Vol. XXIX, No. 34, pp. 1, 3-5, 7, 14.
 (Preached September 24, 1921.)

Christian principles to daily living; (2) doctrinal messages; (3) the Christian perspective of social problems and current events; and (4) miscellaneous.

Sermon Forms

Russell H. Conwell's theory of disposition was essentially classical. In his chapter on "Orators and Their Opportunities" in Acres of Diamonds: Our Everyday Opportunities and Their Wondrous Riches, he concludes his treatment of organization with the statement, "To call for attention, to tell some facts, to reason from those facts, and to urge the listener to do something about it which we wish done, is the plan of nearly all great speeches."¹²³ He gives the same four divisions in his "Lectures on Oratory"¹²⁴ and Observation: Every Man His Own University.¹²⁵ His sermons as delivered, however, rarely conformed strictly to the pattern. The introduction consisted most frequently of the reading of the text on which he intended to speak. This was sometimes accompanied with a reference to some preceding part of the service (a hymn, for example) or some recent occurrence which had led him to select his particular

¹²³ Pp. 392-395.

¹²⁴ Delp manuscript, "Extemporaneous Speech," lecture on January 11, 1890.

¹²⁵ "Oratory," pp. 140-148.

subject. Rather than a statement of facts, he was likely to state the thesis or theme of his sermon. The third section was not so much reasoning or argument about the stated facts as it was exemplification of the theme. Emotional appeals were included in this section, and there was seldom a point by point logical development. As in the case of the lectures, the internal structure of the sermons was loose, adhering to the distributive method more than to any other. The conclusion was frequently a summary of what had gone before or a restatement of the theme. Generally the emotional appeal was heightened. This form of sermon, text plus elaboration by miscellaneous illustrations, was the one he used most frequently.

"The Unhappy Nine"¹²⁶ is an example of this type. Conwell began by referring to the incident in the seventeenth chapter of Luke of Jesus healing ten lepers. A story from the childhood of Lucretia Mott was the preacher's first illustration. The sermon theme was the importance of thankfulness. After the Lucretia Mott incident, there is a paragraph which foreshadows but does not state explicitly the theme.

I wonder where are the nine! I wonder if
there are nine here now, whose mothers have

¹²⁶ The Temple Pulpit, Vol. I, No. 7. (Preached November 23, 1924.) Of the more than 1200 sermons investigated, the great majority followed this form.

comforted them in precisely the same way [as did Lucretia Mott's mother], who never gave a word of thanks? I don't wonder that Jesus sympathized so much with the nine. They had not returned to thank Him. They had not felt that joyful degree of gratitude or appreciation that would move them to such an expression of affection. So He was sorry for them because they lacked the holiest and sweetest sentiments of the human soul.

The next paragraph restates the same idea. Then Conwell tells a dream of his in which he had failed to be thankful. Following that there is another reference to the lepers and a direct statement of the theme: "I thought on this Thanksgiving occasion . . . it would be a good thing to call your attention to the value of gratitude." Four illustrations ensue: a boyhood memory of a debate on the relative importance of the Fourth of July and Thanksgiving; an incident from the life of Samuel Colgate; an account from the childhood of Walter, the architect who built the dome of the Capitol in Washington; and a citing of Cardinal Newman's plea, "Lord, give me power to appreciate Christ." There is a quotation from Shakespeare, a reference to the presence in the service of the Junior Chorus, and a brief recital of some of the circumstances of the first Thanksgiving. The mention of the Pilgrim Fathers leads into the conclusion:

. . . Those Pilgrim Fathers set the example of Thanksgiving Day, which Abraham Lincoln followed when he extended the celebration over the whole Nation. He said it was a duty to develop in the Christian American that character, that disposition, to appreciate the goodness of God, and the

goodness of man, and be thankful. The more thankful the people are, the more they prosper The more thankful they are, the better is the influence upon the other nations of the earth, and we, as American people, this Thanksgiving Day, ought to be so thankful that our voices will ring around the world, and all nations will recognize that we have the loving, beautiful disposition of the one who returned to thank Jesus Christ, and because of it God will bless us

Thanksgiving Day is a far more important day, as religion is more important than education, though education is important. But to love and to gratefully serve our fellow-man is the highest possible attainment of human life. To be one who returns and thanks Jesus Christ should be the hearty prayer of every one of us here to-night.

Conwell's belief in biography as a means of instruction and inspiration has already been pointed out. It should come as no surprise then that many of his sermons were based on the life of a single outstanding person. The form of these is in reality an adaptation of the text plus elaboration mentioned above; that is, he usually selected a scriptural text and connected it in some way with the life of the person on whom he intended to preach. If the individual were a Biblical character, the text might be a verse which mentioned his name. For example, a sermon on James, entitled "Do They See Us?" is based on I Corinthians 15:7 -- "After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles."¹²⁷ Or the text might be a verse which could be

¹²⁷ The Temple Magazine, VI, 443-444. (Preached September 30, 1894.)

connected with some attribute of the character. The fifth chapter of Genesis, which records the life of Enoch, characterizes him as walking with God. "Walking with God"¹²⁸ is a sermon partially based on the life of Enoch, but its text is the second verse of the twenty-third Psalm -- "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters." If the individual were not a Biblical figure, this latter procedure was followed. The text for "Bayard Taylor"¹²⁹ is Psalms 16:6 -- "I have a goodly heritage" -- and the application is that Taylor is a part of the "goodly heritage" of Philadelphians.

Having made his introduction, the preacher selected illustrations from the life of a chosen individual to develop his sermon. The conclusions were usually a restatement of the theme plus an emotional appeal. Among the persons used were: Biblical characters such as Peter,¹³⁰ Rachel,¹³¹ Nehemiah,¹³² Pilate,¹³³ the writers of the four

¹²⁸ Borrowed Axes, pp. 95-108. Also recorded in The Temple Magazine, Vol. VIII, Part 2, pp. 350-356. (Preached November 29, 1896.)

¹²⁹ The Temple Pulpit, Vol. I, No. 8. (Preached November 2, 1924.)

¹³⁰ "A Sermon," The Temple Pulpit, Vol. III, No. 1, pp. 1-13. (Preached May 3, 1891.)

¹³¹ "Mother or Wife?" The Temple Magazine, Vol. IV, No. 3, pp. 1-13. (Preached January 17, 1892.)

¹³² "Embodied Goodness," The True Philadelphian, V, 427-433. (Preached March 4, 1900.)

¹³³ "Pilate's Wedding," The Temple Review, Vol. XVII, No. 1, pp. 3-5, 8. (Preached September 20, 1908.)

gospels,¹³⁴ Rahab,¹³⁵ Hannah,¹³⁶ and Hiram;¹³⁷ preachers and missionaries such as George Dana Boardman,¹³⁸ Dwight L. Moody,¹³⁹ Charles Haddon Spurgeon,¹⁴⁰ and Mrs. Booth-Tucker of the Salvation Army family;¹⁴¹ figures from American history such as Benjamin Franklin,¹⁴² William Penn,¹⁴³

¹³⁴ "Matthew," ibid., No. 11, pp. 3-5, (preached November 15, 1908); "Mark," ibid., No. 12, pp. 3-5, 10-11, (preached November 15, 1908); "Luke," ibid., No. 13, pp. 3-5, 9, (preached November 22, 1908); and "John," ibid., No. 14, pp. 3-5, 10-11, (preached November 22, 1908).

¹³⁵ "Not a Harlot, but a Princess," ibid., Vol. XXVIII, No. 31, pp. 1, 3-7. (Preached June 22, 1919.)

¹³⁶ "Hannah," ibid., Vol. XXIX, No. 24, pp. 1, 3, 5, 7. (Preached May 22, 1921.)

¹³⁷ "Hiram, the Builder," ibid., Vol. XXX, No. 23, pp. 1, 3, 5-8, 10. (Preached May 21, 1922.)

¹³⁸ "An American Martyr," The Temple Magazine, VII, 123-125. (Preached February 24, 1895.)

¹³⁹ "Lessons from Moody's Life," The True Philadelphian, V, 267-270. (Preached January 7, 1900.)

¹⁴⁰ "Life of Charles H. Spurgeon," The Temple Magazine, Vol. IV, No. 7, pp. 1-18. (Preached February 14, 1892.)

¹⁴¹ "Death of Mrs. Booth-Tucker," The Temple Review, Vol. XII, No. 6, pp. 3-5, 8, 14-15. (Preached November 1, 1903.)

¹⁴² "Influence of Franklin's Religion," ibid., Vol. XIV, No. 17, pp. 3-5. (Preached January 14, 1906.)

¹⁴³ "William Penn -- the Rich Man's Son," ibid., Vol. XVI, No. 8, pp. 3-5, 10. (Preached November 10, 1907.)

Patrick Henry,¹⁴⁴ and Mary Dyar;¹⁴⁵ and contemporaries who might be in the news, friends of his, or considered worthy of a sermon for some other reason, such as Frederick Douglass,¹⁴⁶ Louisa M. Alcott,¹⁴⁷ Abraham Lincoln,¹⁴⁸ Ida Lewis (the only woman lighthouse keeper in the United States),¹⁴⁹ Booker T. Washington,¹⁵⁰ John Wanamaker,¹⁵¹ Edith Cavell,¹⁵² and Philippo Maramon (an Armenian acquaintance, whose life story Conwell told to raise relief funds for the Near East Committee).¹⁵³

¹⁴⁴ "Christian Liberty -- Patrick Henry," ibid., No. 14, pp. 3-5, 9-10. (Preached December 15, 1907.)

¹⁴⁵ "Mary Dyar," ibid., No. 10, pp. 3-5, 9. (Preached November 3, 1907.)

¹⁴⁶ "Frederick Douglass," The Temple Magazine, VII, 164-166. (Preached February 24, 1895.)

¹⁴⁷ "Modern Miriam," The Temple Review, Vol. XVI, No. 50, pp. 3-6, 13. (Preached November 24, 1907.)

¹⁴⁸ Conwell had several sermons on Lincoln. Two of them are: "Lincoln," ibid., Vol. XVII, No. 36, pp. 3-5, (preached February 14, 1909); and "Abraham Lincoln," ibid., Vol. XXV, No. 5, pp. 3-5, 16-18, (preached February 13, 1916). The latter is also recorded in Sermons for the Great Days of the Year, pp. 38-55.

¹⁴⁹ "Ida Lewis; Who Did What She Could," ibid., Vol. XX, No. 50, pp. 3-5, n. d.

¹⁵⁰ "Booker T. Washington," ibid., Vol. XXIV, No. 23, pp. 3-6, 12-15. (Preached November 21, 1915.)

¹⁵¹ "An Ideal Example," ibid., Vol. XXXI, No. 16, pp. 1, 3-5, n. d.

¹⁵² "Edith Cavell."

¹⁵³ "Philippo Maramon," The Temple Pulpit, Vol. I, No. 1. (Preached December 7, 1924.)

A somewhat different type of sermon is one which might be called a dramatized Biblical narrative. The speaker selects a story from the Bible and then elaborates upon it. He describes the thoughts and feelings of the characters involved, gives them additional dialogue to say, and then stresses the point he wishes the audience to remember. For example, "Open Confession"¹⁵⁴ is an elaboration of the story found in the ninth chapter of John about the man blind from birth whom Jesus healed. Six of the seven printed pages of the sermon tell the story, including such details as the feeling of the man's parents and the inquisition of the members of the community upon his being healed. The last page points out, "Open confession was for the time grievous affliction, but it worked out as it always does, 'a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.'" A similar sermon based on the same story was called "Little Joe,"¹⁵⁵ the name Conwell gave the beggar, and the emphasis here is that our afflictions are sometimes sent for our own good.¹⁵⁶ Other sermons of this type are: "The Old

¹⁵⁴ The Temple Pulpit, II, 39-45. (Preached February 23, 1890.)

¹⁵⁵ The Temple Magazine, Vol. III, No. 19, pp. 1-8. (The sermon was preached at the Madison, Wisconsin, Chautauqua Assembly, July 21, 1891. The account published here was from a "corrected" newspaper report.)

¹⁵⁶ It is interesting to note that "Little Joe" became "Little Bo" in 1893 when the American Baptist Publishing Society of Philadelphia brought out Little Bo: A Study in the Ninth of John.

Gate,¹⁵⁷ "Diana or Christ,"¹⁵⁸ and "A Boy Lost."¹⁵⁹ "The Most Eloquent Words"¹⁶⁰ is closely related; however, it includes extensive passages of scripture quoted verbatim and is less dependent on the preacher's imaginative powers.

A fourth type of sermon is the kind in which Conwell would read a chapter of the Bible, commenting on each verse as he read. "Mary's Monument"¹⁶¹ is such a treatment of the fourteenth chapter of Mark. Other chapters so used were Acts 10¹⁶² and Romans 12.¹⁶³

The series, though not a different type, is worthy of mention. Apparently Dr. Conwell occasionally preached several consecutive sermons on related themes. Twenty-one sermons on the Apostle Paul are reported in The Temple

¹⁵⁷ The Temple Magazine, Vol. III, No. 23, pp. 1-8. (Preached October 4, 1891.)

¹⁵⁸ The Temple Review, Vol. XVII, No. 17, pp. 3-5, 9. (Preached December 27, 1908.)

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., Vol. XXIV, No. 20, pp. 3-6, 12-14. (Preached March 7, 1916.)

¹⁶⁰ The Temple Pulpit, Vol. I, No. 23. (Preached January 11, 1925.)

¹⁶¹ The Temple Review, Vol. X, No. 6, pp. 3-6. (Preached May 4, 1902.)

¹⁶² "A Scripture Reading: in the Acts," ibid., Vol. XVI, No. 2, pp. 3-5, 15. (Preached September 29, 1907.)

¹⁶³ "Scripture Reading of the Twelfth Chapter of Romans," ibid., Vol. XXX, No. 29, pp. 1, 3-5. (Preached June 18, 1922.)

Review during the fall of 1893 and winter of 1894.¹⁶⁴

Among the topics considered are Paul's parents, his teacher (Gamaliel), his conversion, his difficulties gaining acceptance among the Christians, and incidents on various missionary journeys. A month after the last reported sermon in the series, Conwell preached on "Paul, the Orator." Because of the limits of time this sermon was preached on two consecutive Sundays; the second part does not treat his oratory as much as it does his last days and death. Another series -- this one of only six sermons -- was on living nobly. The titles of the sermons, which are largely self-explanatory, are: "Foundations of a Noble Character: Paul's Example,"¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ "The Apostle Paul," V, 435-437; "The Apostle Paul: Paul's Mother," *ibid.*, pp. 447-449; "The Apostle Paul: Paul's Father," *ibid.*, pp. 459-461; "The Apostle Paul: The Schoolmaster," *ibid.*, pp. 471-473; "The Apostle Paul: His Young Manhood," *ibid.*, pp. 483-485; "The Apostle Paul: Paul's Theological Seminary," *ibid.*, pp. 495-497; "The Apostle Paul: Proved by Adversity," *ibid.*, pp. 507-509; "The Apostle Paul: The Undelivered Message," *ibid.*, pp. 519-521; "The Apostle Paul: At His Old Home," *ibid.*, pp. 531-533; "The Apostle Paul: True Nobility," *ibid.*, pp. 543-545; "The Apostle Paul: The Man and the Opportunity," *ibid.*, pp. 555-557; "The Apostle Paul: A Happy Sufferer," *ibid.*, pp. 579-581; "The Apostle Paul," *ibid.*, pp. 591-593; "The Apostle Paul: Soul Liberty Advocated," *ibid.*, pp. 603-605; "The Apostle Paul: Good Out of Evil," VI, 3-5; "The Apostle Paul: Another Door Open," *ibid.*, pp. 15-17; "The Apostle Paul: Beginning in Macedonia," *ibid.*, pp. 27-29; "The Apostle Paul: Paul's Moral Courage," *ibid.*, pp. 39-40; "The Apostle Paul: Dispensing Blessings," *ibid.*, pp. 51-53; "The Apostle Paul: The Heart of Idolatry," *ibid.*, pp. 63-65; "The Apostle Paul: Dangers of Success," *ibid.*, pp. 75-77, 80.

¹⁶⁵ The True Philadelphian, II, 576-584. (Preached August 14, 1898.)

"Foundations of a Noble Life,"¹⁶⁶ "Foundations of a Noble Character,"¹⁶⁷ "Foundations of a Noble Character: The Marriage State,"¹⁶⁸ "Foundations of a Noble Character: Good Influence,"¹⁶⁹ and "A Noble Business Man."¹⁷⁰

In summary, the forms which Conwell's sermons took were: text plus illustrations drawn from various sources; text plus exemplification chiefly from the life of one individual; dramatized Biblical narrative; and verse by verse comments on some chapter from the Bible. He infrequently preached a series of sermons.

Kinds of Supporting Material

In his sermons as in his lectures Conwell's chief form of supporting material is the illustration or example. The great majority of his illustrations are from one of these four sources: the Bible, history, current events, or his personal experience.

Usually a sermon employs two or more of these types of illustrations. "Dismissed without Provisions" is

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 607-612. (Preached August 21, 1898.)

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 631-637. (Preached August 28, 1898.)

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 656-664. (Preached September 4, 1898.)

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 684-691. (Preached September 11, 1898.)

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 716-721. (Preached September 18, 1898.)

a typical example of a sermon employing several. It opens with a vivid description and elaboration of the Biblical incident of Abraham sending away Hagar and Ishmael. Two historical examples come from the lives of a Roman Emperor and a Russian Czar. There is a story from Conwell's childhood, two from his personal travels in China and India, and another from a New Hampshire law case with which he had been connected. "Hidden Deeds of Bravery,"¹⁷¹ apparently delivered to a group of Civil War veterans since it has the salutation, "Comrades," is almost entirely developed by examples drawn from battle experiences of the Civil War -- those that are a matter of record as well as Conwell's personal recollections. On the other hand, "Angels Visit the Industrious"¹⁷² uses Biblical illustrations exclusively (eleven scriptural visits of angels to earth serve as supporting material). The 1902 goodwill tour by Prince Henry of Germany was a current event used, along with numerous examples from the diplomatic history of leading modern nations, to urge a return to the principles of God in conducting our international relations.¹⁷³ "A Perfect

¹⁷¹ The Temple Magazine, Vol. III, No. 13, pp. 1-14. (Preached May 24, 1891.)

¹⁷² The Temple Review, Vol. XIX, No. 14, pp. 3-5, 10. (Preached December 11, 1910.)

¹⁷³ "The Going of the Prince," ibid., IX, 499-505. (Preached March 2, 1902.)

Man"¹⁷⁴ draws its supporting material from the lives of Moslemian; Wesley; Diogenes; "a Massachusetts judge"; Peter, the Great; John Brown; General Havelock, commander of a British army in India; Kossuth; Mary, Queen of Scots; Samuel Johnson; Garfield; Herschel, the astronomer; Bayard Taylor; and Charles V. "Exceptional Experiences"¹⁷⁵ uses illustrations from the life of William Cullen Bryant, a "young mother" of Conwell's acquaintance, "Brother Biting" (a former deacon at Temple), a current British election, Lord Fisher (a recent speaker and visitor at Temple University), Judas of the New Testament, and Saul of the Old.

In addition to illustrations, quotation was another form of supporting material. Naturally the Bible was cited extensively. Verses from hymns were quoted occasionally as were passages from the general literary field.

An examination of more than twelve hundred of Conwell's sermons, preached during the years 1889-1924, reveals that approximately eleven out of twelve of them began with a Biblical text. He referred to the New Testament almost two and a half times as often as the Old. Over half of the New Testament texts came from the four Gospels.

¹⁷⁴ The Temple Magazine, Vol. III, No. 26, pp. 1-9. (Preached October 25, 1891.)

¹⁷⁵ The Temple Pulpit, Vol. I, No. 4. (Preached November 2, 1924.)

Eight books of the Old Testament (Ezra, Lamentations, Hosea, Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and Zechariah) and four of the New (Philemon, II John, III John, and Jude) were not used at all. The accompanying chart gives an analysis by books of the texts he employed.

He seldom preached from the same text twice. When he did, the emphases were different. For example, he preached several sermons from the story of the Prodigal Son found in Luke 11:15-32. Each pointed up a different application. "Not Tried"¹⁷⁶ quotes verse 28 and denounces the elder son's sin of self-righteousness. "Above the Snake Line" employs no particular verse of the story but is based on the tradition that the prodigal went down from the mountains of Judea to the plains and cities of the shore. The degradation is pictured as physical, mental, moral and spiritual. Somewhat akin to this is an earlier sermon, "I Will Arise,"¹⁷⁷ based on verse 18, which portrays the prodigal's decision to return home as a determination for social, intellectual, moral and religious improvement. "Man's True Self"¹⁷⁸ chooses a part of the seventeenth verse,

¹⁷⁶ The Temple Pulpit, Vol. III, No. 2, pp. 1-11. (Preached May 10, 1891.)

¹⁷⁷ The Temple Magazine, Vol. III, No. 24, pp. 1-9. (Preached October 11, 1891.)

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., Vol. IV, No. 11, pp. 3-11. (Preached March 6, 1892.)

ANALYSIS BY BOOKS OF SERMON TEXTS

Old Testament

Genesis	29
Exodus	21
Leviticus	2
Numbers	2
Deuteronomy	20
Joshua	5
Judges	6
Ruth	11
I Samuel	22
II Samuel	2
I Kings	9
II Kings	12
I Chronicles	7
II Chronicles	6
Ezra	0
Nehemiah	9
Esther	2
Job	12
Psalms	60
Proverbs	14
Ecclesiastes	7
Song of Solomon	2
Isaiah	28
Jeremiah	5
Lamentations	0
Ezekiel	8
Daniel	5
Hosea	0
Joel	1
Amos	2
Obadiah	0
Jonah	1
Micah	2
Nahum	0
Habakkuk	0
Zephaniah	0
Haggai	1
Zechariah	0
Malachi	7

New Testament

Matthew	127
Mark	38
Luke	125
John	132
Acts	70
Romans	42
I Corinthians	45
II Corinthians	25
Galatians	18
Ephesians	13
Philippians	19
Colossians	10
I Thessalonians	3
II Thessalonians	2
I Timothy	15
II Timothy	7
Titus	1
Philemon	0
Hebrews	35
James	13
I Peter	7
II Peter	10
I John	16
II John	0
III John	0
Jude	0
Revelation	24

Summary

Total for Old Testament	320
Total for New Testament	797
Sermons without Texts	111
	<u>1228</u>

"he came to himself," to preach that the hearers should stop and consider, should come to themselves and begin serving Christ immediately. The character of the father of the prodigal is the emphasis in "Love Dying for Sin."¹⁷⁹ "A Christmas Average"¹⁸⁰ takes its text¹⁸¹ from the parable, but the sermon is on giving one's self in service rather than merely giving presents.

In addition to using Bible verses as texts, Genwell also cited them as a form of support throughout the sermon. Some sermons which had no single text had extensive quotations internally. Examples are: "We Shall Live Again,"¹⁸² "Christ's Sabbath," and "Controversies and True Religion."¹⁸³ "The Quickening Spirit"¹⁸⁴ refers to twelve places in the Bible where the statement occurs that the Spirit quickens, while "Calling Evil Good"¹⁸⁵ is

¹⁷⁹ The Temple Review, IX, 399-404. (Preached January 4, 1902.)

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., Vol. XI, No. 12, pp. 3-6. (Preached December 15, 1902.)

¹⁸¹ "And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger?" Luke 15:17.

¹⁸² The Temple Magazine, Vol. VIII, Pt. 1, pp. 231-233. (Preached May 3, 1896.)

¹⁸³ The Temple Review, Vol. XXXI, No. 22, pp. 1, 3-4, 6-8. (Preached May 20, 1923.)

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., Vol. XI, No. 30, pp. 3-6. (Preached April 19, 1903.)

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., Vol. XXV, No. 8, pp. 3-7. (Preached January 28, 1917.)

introduced by listing many of the "woes" found in the Bible. On another occasion¹⁸⁶ a description of the Temple of Solomon was developed in part by the reading of the account found in I Kings 7:15-22.

When he used hymns as a part of his sermon, Conwell generally selected those that were very familiar. "O, Day of Rest and Gladness" is quoted in "A Holy Day," and "Draw Me Nearer" in "Walking with God." "A Sermon" cites "Rock of Ages" and "Jesus, Lover of My Soul." Other familiar hymns are quoted in "The World's Needs," "Your Salvation,"¹⁸⁷ and "Faith that Never Fails."

Dr. Conwell quoted both poetry and prose from the realm of general literature. Whittier's "The Quaker of Olden Time" and "Maud Muller" appear in "While Yet Dark."¹⁸⁸ Part of Bryant's "Thanatopsis" is in "Above the Snake Line," while a verse of "To a Waterfowl" is in "Exceptional Experiences." "Mother's Day"¹⁸⁹ quotes Eliza Cook's "The Old Armchair." In another sermon two lengthy paragraphs of a description of the Ocklawaha River by Sidney Lanier are read

¹⁸⁶ "Choosing the Man or the Beautiful Gate," The Temple Pulpit, Vol. I, No. 2. (Preached October 19, 1924.)

¹⁸⁷ The Temple Review, Vol. X, No. 23, pp. 3-6, 13. (No date given.)

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., Vol. XXX, No. 19, pp. 1, 3-8. (Preached April 16, 1922.)

¹⁸⁹ Sermons for the Great Days of the Year, pp. 107-122.

verbatim.¹⁹⁰ "George Washington Day"¹⁹¹ contains extensive quotations from his "Farewell Address." Two paragraphs of a speech by Dr. McLean, President of Princeton University, appear in "What Is 'Good Luck.'"¹⁹² "Job, the Greater Poem"¹⁹³ contains quotations from Shakespeare. Classical citations from Plato, Homer, Aratus, Cicero, Ovid and Seneca are presented in "The World's Needs." These are typical of other literary quotations: poetry, prose or drama from the pens of authors known to the majority of his audience comprised his usual selections.

Statistics seldom appear in Conwell's sermons. However, the idea of our indebtedness to workingmen, discussed in "Temple College Work,"¹⁹⁴ is developed by statistics showing the value of property saved by Philadelphia firemen, the number of firemen employed by the city, the number of schools (and of pupils and teachers), and an estimated value to the community of the services of the police force. A somewhat different type of figures appears

¹⁹⁰ "Closer Acquaintance," The Temple Review, Vol. XII, No. 18, pp. 3-6. (Preached January 10, 1904.) Also published in The Temple Pulpit, Vol. I, No. 19; and in Acres of Diamonds, pp. 28-37.

¹⁹¹ Sermons for the Great Days of the Year, pp. 56-70.

¹⁹² The Temple Pulpit, Vol. I, No. 12. (Preached December 21, 1924.)

¹⁹³ The Temple Review, Vol. XXIV, No. 25, pp. 3-6, 13. (Preached April 30, 1916.)

¹⁹⁴ The Temple Magazine, Vol. III, No. 5, pp. 1-13. (Preached May 31, 1891.)

in "Go Forward." In this sermon Conwell visualizes the results if each member of his congregation would give ten cents a week to foreign missions. He then states that if each member of the Temple Chorus would convert one soul to Christ each month, 3000 would be won within a year; that if each usher visited one sick person per week, the church could reach 130,000 sufferers in the twelve-months period.

Dr. Conwell occasionally illustrated his sermons with visual aids of various kinds. He had two baby chicks in a glass cage when he spoke on "Yearning for Something Higher,"¹⁹⁵ a squirrel for "The Squirrel's Sermon,"¹⁹⁶ and two caged doves for "Death of a Dove."¹⁹⁷ Fruits and vegetables of the harvest season were on the platform when he preached "Miracle of the Seed"¹⁹⁸ and "Harvest Home."¹⁹⁹ During these two sermons he pointed to such things as an ear of corn, a shock of wheat and oak leaves as visual aids. "I hold my text in my hand," Conwell said, referring to a

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., Vol. VIII, Part 1, pp. 195-197. (Preached March 29, 1896.)

¹⁹⁶ The Temple Review, IX, 127-131. (Preached November 10, 1901.)

¹⁹⁷ The Temple Pulpit, Vol. I, No. 3. (Preached October 26, 1924.)

¹⁹⁸ The Temple Review, Vol. XI, No. 4, pp. 3-6. (Preached October 19, 1902.)

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., Vol. XVI, No. 6, pp. 3-5. (Preached October 21, 1907.) Also published in Sermons for the Great Days of the Year, pp. 177-188.

piece of gray moss when he spoke on "Mother of the Lily."²⁰⁰ He held a lily for "Testimony of the Flowers"²⁰¹ and "Lilies of the Field."²⁰² During the course of "Pure Water," he took a vial of clear water to which he added "grains," which made it "black like ink." Possibly he used other kinds of visual aids such as charts or maps, but these are the chief ones which can be identified from a reading of his printed sermons.

Conwell's chief form of supporting material was the illustration -- drawn from the Bible, from history, from current events, or from his own personal experience. He also relied on the Bible for texts and quotations within sermons. Verses from hymns and general literature were used occasionally. Statistics seldom appear. Various animals, plants or other objects served as visual aids from time to time.

Conwell used his supporting material not so much to prove or to clarify his themes as to amplify them. The sermon "Closer Acquaintance" demonstrates the amplifying process. Immediately after stating his text, "Increasing

²⁰⁰ The Temple Review, VIII, 94-96, 105-106. (Preached April 7, 1901.) Also published in Borrowed Axes, pp. 13-24.

²⁰¹ The Temple Review, Vol. XXVIII, No. 24, pp. 1, 3-7. (Preached May 16, 1920.)

²⁰² Fields of Glory, pp. 11-26.

in the knowledge of God," Conwell spends most of two paragraphs in stating the theme:

The first thought that came to my mind while meditating upon the chapter of which this text is a part was that we need to increase in the knowledge of things close at hand in order to fulfill each day's duties towards God In many places the Apostle Paul has extended this idea throughout all the creation, including the laws of Nature, the physical, mental and spiritual laws, the laws which came through revelation from Sinai and from the prophets, including the law of the human conscience and all the laws that are brought to bear for the salvation of men. We are to grow in knowledge of all these things.

Let me illustrate for a few minutes how much more there is at hand than we think about, and how each one may increase his knowledge without moving out of his present sphere.

Then Conwell gives ten illustrations, each of which shows how someone increased his knowledge without moving from the environment in which he found himself. The conclusion makes an application to spiritual growth:

. . . If you would grow in knowledge, if you would appreciate the beautiful things around you, if you would understand Christ more, you must come into personal contact with Him There is not a soul to-day but what can come in direct, personal and spiritual communication with Him, receive the evidence of His divine presence, look up in His beautiful face, and take His hand and hear His words. If a person would appreciate this Bible; if he would understand its value and grow in grace with every reading of it, he must know the Author, he must know Christ, and he needs to open his heart's doors to the incoming of the Saviour. Then shall the Bible and religion and the Church and heaven and all those kindred things become of double interest to him, because he has seen the man, he has seen the Divine One.

Conwell used little direct ethical proof in his sermons. Of course, a minister, because of his office and his message, generally has a measure of ethical proof with his own congregation. All of the sermons available for study were addressed to the membership of Baptist Temple. Conwell established himself as a man of wisdom by referring to his years of experience.

I am not a prophet, except as experience of many years has shown me how results come from certain causes. But I can look forward into 1925 and tell many of you and myself what is going to happen, as I can measure it by the opportunities that are now here and by the talents that you have.²⁰³

An even stronger statement is found near the conclusion of the same sermon.

. . . Young men and women, I look down the corridors of time to the far end where you stand at the beginning, and tell you from the experience of life, and from the experience of others I have taught and seen through the years, that the teachings of Jesus Christ in the Sermon on the Mount, and the Ten Commandments, are the foundation of true human character.²⁰⁴

Many of Conwell's illustrations came from his personal experience. He introduced them frequently with such statements as: "I remember when I was a farmer's son that . . ."²⁰⁵ "When traveling for the New York Tribune, forty

²⁰³ "What Is 'Good Luck.'"

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ "The Sweetening Spirit," The Temple Pulpit, Vol. I, No. 6. (Preached November 23, 1924.)

years ago, I went to Constantinople."²⁰⁶ and "I remember years ago when I was practicing law in Minneapolis, Minn., that"²⁰⁷ At times Conwell indicated that he had a wealth of material on a particular point and must select only a few choice examples. In "The Power of the Gospel" he says: "There are so many cases I would refer to if the time permitted."²⁰⁸ He made no overt attempt to establish his own character as any better than that of his hearers. In fact, he points out his own shortcomings in sentences such as, "I have myself been convicted of this neglect again and again, and have felt myself a great sinner."²⁰⁹ He showed himself a man of good will by many statements similar to this:

Friends, there is nothing I could wish more highly than that you all should have a deep, full, realizing sense that God still loves you; that He will stand true, stand for you, and that He has cared for you all through this world, and that He will not fail you in the end.²¹⁰

²⁰⁶ "Philippo Maramon."

²⁰⁷ "Choosing the Soil."

²⁰⁸ The Temple Pulpit, Vol. I, No. 18. (Preached January 18, 1925.)

²⁰⁹ "The Unhappy Nine."

²¹⁰ "Realizing God's Care."

Another way of indicating his good will was by identifying himself with his listeners. An instance of this is: "This morning I will talk with you as plainly as though we were sitting together at home"211 He might also ask his audience for their prayerful support. Such a request forms the opening paragraph of "Heart Service."

I certainly wish to have the prayers of this congregation that the Lord may give me the strength and the wisdom to carry on all the great work which seems to multiply so rapidly; work all around me. I shall strive to the end to do all that I can, and I ask you to pray for me that my strength may be greater.212

A lengthy statement, incorporating all these methods of ethical proof, is in "Death of a Dove."

The presence this morning of our English brethren connected with the highest educational institutions of England . . . impresses me very strongly with the difficulties of this ministry.

Any man or woman can live daily the character of Christ, and thus teach it in the most effective way. But in these progressive days . . . when the common man who has had only a common school education knows more than the graduates of the Universities knew 150 years ago, it is a difficult task for one engaged in daily business to speak from the pulpit and instruct and advise such an audience as I have here gathered this morning.

I find it exceedingly embarrassing to seek messages to deliver; although I seek in every quarter of the literary world for helpful

211 Ibid.

212 The Temple Pulpit, Vol. I, No. 24. (Preached March 22, 1925.

illustrations, -- for useful teaching. But now, in almost every home I visit, I find the best literature, the deepest psychology, the most modern discoveries of science

I have found it humiliatingly difficult to suitably present the Gospel to these thousands of students of higher education. Where a few years ago there were only hundreds of such disciplined minds, I realize now that there are thousands. The ministry is therefore a place of growing difficulty.

Then again, we cannot secure too much knowledge or too much education. So we study for years, -- study closely to lead the intelligent people of this day, and yet fall far short of an adequate ministry.

The nature of the sermon occasion suggests that Conwell must have employed emotional proof. Brigrance points out that "the sermon, by nature, is more emotional than most other motivative speeches."²¹³ Certainly every sermon of Conwell's made some pathetic appeal. One was to man's desire to find spiritual peace. Such sermons as "Turned to the Flame," "Pure Water," and "Nothing But Slag" pointed to God as the one who could transform and unify the life of the individual. "The Principal Motive," according to Conwell, was service to Christ. Upon that assumption Conwell made his most frequently employed appeal for service to mankind as a means of demonstrating love for Christ. He gave his answer to the question "How Shall Godliness Be Infused into Daily Life" in many sermons other

²¹³ P. 288.

than the one that bore that title. He called upon his congregation to put the principles of love and service into action as business men,²¹⁴ as employers,²¹⁵ as doctors,²¹⁶ or as members of whatever profession they might be. He appealed to the altruism of his hearers to gain church support for education,²¹⁷ hospitals and medical missionaries.²¹⁸ He felt that effective evangelism grew out of the individual's willingness in daily life to be of service to his brother.²¹⁹ While he might make other lesser appeals such as to Christian patriotism on Washington's birthday²²⁰ or the Fourth of July,²²¹ Conwell placed his chief emphasis on serving humanity as a means of demonstrating one's love of God.

Sermon Style

It is not only what a speaker says but how he says it that determines his effectiveness as an orator. Thus, a

214 "Religion in Business."

215 "Employees."

216 "A Christian Doctor."

217 "The Church and Education."

218 "Christ Healing the Sick."

219 "The Mission of the Church."

220 "George Washington Day."

221 "The American Flag," Sermons for the Great Days of the Year, pp. 158-176.

consideration of style is important in evaluating Conwell's sermons. Clarity, vividness, and impressiveness²²² are the criteria selected for analyzing his style.

A few sample passages demonstrate the simplicity which generally characterized Conwell's language. These examples show a direct, personal quality in phraseology. The first is from "Jesus' Use of Vacation."

Did you ever stand at the corner of a busy street when some adjoining school was dismissing at Christmas time and see the children rushing out along the walk and up the street, all laden with their books and bags, -- all going home?²²³

Although the sentence is a long one, it is easily understood. In both his long and short sentences, Conwell's meaning was usually instantly intelligible. The second example is from "What Is Good Luck."

I have had many people say to me, "I know many members of the Church who are no better than others who are not members." So do I. But ninety-five out of a hundred in every church I have ever seen are noble, upright characters of integrity and truth. You may take any church you have probably visited, and where you may find here and there a black sheep, the most of them are true to their God. They are the noblest kind of companions for you to have. Forty years in your church life have convinced me that the strongest friendships are those which come from association in the Christian Church.

²²² Gray and Braden, p. 393.

²²³ The Temple Pulpit, Vol. I, No. 11. (Preached December 21, 1924.)

A third is from "Insure Your 'Election.'"

The other day in our city a factory burned, and I saw the owner of the factory near the building sitting on a pile of lumber. The building was burning down. There was nothing else that could be done. I said to him: "This is a sad sight." He said: "It would be if it were not for this insurance policy." He had been wise enough to have it insured, and when the fire began to burn, he went to the house and hunted up the policy.²²⁴

Two of the above examples show Conwell's use of direct quotation. Although he does not use such dialogues as frequently in his sermons as in his lectures, he does employ them. As in the following case, he often developed a point inductively by a dialogue plus a summarizing general statement.

The elder son, held at home, unquestionably said: "Oh, look at me! I never drink; I never take a glass of wine; and here is this young man, who has taken his money, gone to the city and spent his money among harlots, and spent it in the wickedest, vilest way, and yet you receive him. And here am I, one who never drinks a glass of liquor; never! I am respected and honorable." Are you? -- are you? Let me ask you, "Did you ever taste of liquor?" "Well, no; I don't think I ever tasted any." "Well, why not?" "Because I was too stingy to spend my money for it." "Well, if you did taste it, did you like it?" "No; I hated the very smell of it. I do not like it. It is a disagreeable thing."

He who prides himself on resisting a temptation that has never come, overestimates himself, and he who overestimates himself under

²²⁴ The Temple Pulpit, Vol. I, No. 20. (Preached February 22, 1925.)

circumstances like that is the greatest sinner
of the two.²²⁵

Similar dialogues may be found in "Dismissed without Provisions," "Diana or Christ," and "The Mission of the Church." In the last of these, each section of the address is developed through this technique. Conwell achieved a measure of clarity with concrete terms, personal address, and direct quotation.

"Vividness has its primary basis in
imagery"²²⁶ A passage from "Misunderstood"
illustrates Conwell's use of imagery.

He [Christ] looked down the years and saw how blest the world would be when the Cuban exchanged his oranges with the Esquimaux furs -- when the coffee of Brazil should pass the teas of China in swift exchange -- when all lands should enjoy the best fruits and fabrics of every other, annihilating the effects of cold, heat, drought or rain -- when the Patagonian should toss his fruits in the lap of the Icelandic, and the Norseman lend his reindeer to the Hottentot. But, instead, He saw the spices and perfumes of Arabia wasting their sweetness on the desert air, generation after generation. He saw the ivory of the Congo and the gold of Ophir lying unseen or uncared-for, the rich fruits of the ocean isles decaying where they fell, vast mines unopened, great waterfalls unutilized by man, and often grain enough to feed a continent rotting in the fields. All because men could not come to a fraternal understanding.²²⁷

²²⁵ "Not Tried."

²²⁶ Gray and Braden, p. 394.

²²⁷ The Temple Pulpit, Vol. II, No. 20, pp. 3-10. (Preached February 8, 1891.)

Other instances of imagery may be observed in some of the passages cited primarily to show impressiveness. Under this heading there are also examples of figures of speech, which contribute to vividness as well as to impressiveness.

The rhetorical question is perhaps the most noticeable of Conwell's devices to secure impressiveness. "Does Your Anchor Hold" is probably the sermon which best demonstrates his use of this technique. After the initial illustration, the development is almost exclusively by questions. Sample paragraphs are:

Have you been abused, my brother? Has someone deceived or persecuted you unjustly, and have they put you to loss and shame? Let me ask you, does your anchor hold? . . .

Have you ever been betrayed by one who had loved you, and one whom you had trusted and loved? Did you put your whole faith in a man, and did he turn out to be bad? . . . And then did your anchor drag? . . .

Have you been in want? Were you hungry this week? Were you feeling that you could not come to church because you did not have the right clothing to wear, and you honestly and rightfully desired to appear neat and nice before your friends? . . .

Have you trusted some Christian man who was high in his church and devout in his profession, who has prayed and spoken so eloquently of his faith in Christ, who has recited the experiences of his conversion with such elation and such great display? Have you trusted that man, and have you found him to be shallow and immoral and uncertain, really unchristian? . . .

Have you been in great sorrow and taken your child's body in your arms and laid it into the little coffin? . . .

Have you been down to the very gates of death and have they said to you, as to many of us, "He is dying"? . . .

Does your anchor hold? Can you, when death comes, and when your friends are gathered around, just look up and say, "My anchor holds"? If you cannot, prepare yourself for it now

Description was another means of gaining impressiveness. Solomon's temple is pictured in these words.

There the grand temple stands, its lofty towers look down on the Kidron and Gihon streams, which like silver threads gleam far down in the deep valley. The broad courts dazzle the eyes of the visitor. The cloisters, corridors, and chambers are polished as a mirror. The altars send up the spiral scrolls of prayers to the heavens and fill the air with the fragrance of burning incense. The veil of the Holy of Holies shines with golden embroidery. The ark with its tables of stone rest [sic] finally beneath the cherubim. Winged angels of gold spread their hands in holy benediction over that reminder of Sinai's thunders; and over all these wonders of architecture and gorgeous displays of the sculptor and jeweler, the effulgent glory of God rested as a cloud of light. From street to street of that happy city, covering house-tops, crowding the walls and making the Mount of Olives a gorgeous pageant of gaily attired multitudes, the triumphant people made the heavens shake with Psalms and huzzas of delight. O happy people! O, thou city of the great King! peace be within thy walls and prosperity within thy palaces! you have taken God at his word, you have proved Him and found Him true.²²⁸

The last sentence of the above quotation provides one of the rare instances of an apostrophe in Conwell's sermons.

²²⁸ "God's Promises Fulfilled," The Temple Pulpit, Vol. I, No. 28. (Date of preaching not given.)

The figure of faith in Christ as the anchor of the soul runs through "Does Your Anchor Hold." Another extended figure is in "The Divine Touch." The people of the world are portrayed as harps "awaiting the touch of the Church, the representative of Christ on earth."

Oh, the silent harps! Harps of ebony.
 Harps of sandal wood. Harps of olive. Harps
 of silver. Harps of gold. Harps resplendent
 with pearls, sapphires, emeralds and diamonds.
 Harps of ten strings. Harps of a thousand
 strings. Harps in the form of circles, shields,
 hearts, octagons and bows. Harps of Jerusalem,
 of Delhi, of Madras, of Canton, of Thibet [sic],
 of Timbuctoo, of Thebes, of Athens, of Paris,
 London and Washington. Harps in the cottage
 of the mountains, in the cabin of the plains,
 in the castles along great rivers, in the
 halls of the cities, in the sublime cathedral,
 the humble chapel, in the lovely home. All
 silent. Listen. All is still. No thrum,
 thrum, thrum, of delicious music is heard.
 Heavenly music is dead. Harps in myriads hid
 in rich draperies, lying neglected in the
 rubbish or standing in the ornamental niche,
 voiceless and dead.²²⁹

Each of the passages cited above shows extensive parallelism, which is another characteristic of Conwell's style. As may be seen above, this parallelism was sometimes of words within a sentence, of sentence alongside sentence, or of paragraph to paragraph. Entire sermons, especially the biographical ones, were constructed by contrasting one character with another. Typical examples are:

²²⁹ The Temple Pulpit, Vol. II, No. 16, pp. 3-10.
 (Preached December 6, 1890.)

"Enon and Callirrhoe"²³⁰ (John, the Baptist, and Herod Antipas); "Dark Remorse and Bright Repentance"²³¹ (Judas and Peter); "Diverging Paths"²³² (Manaen and Herod); "Calaphas and Dreyfus"; and "Lydia and Cleopatra."²³³

Closely related to the parallel structure is the use of a sentence as a type of refrain. For example, in "Heaven's Reply," a funeral address upon the death of John Peddie, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord" appears as the concluding statement in seven paragraphs as a reply to the questions asked therein. A typical paragraph is:

My sister, did brother Peddie visit you in your widowhood, or did he provide for you as an orphan? Did he bring the cup of comfort when a great grief filled your home with gloom? Did he tell you when burdened with sin how to cast all your cares on Christ? Did he help you to resist temptation and show you the joy of being useful to those who needed you? And now do you come up to the door of death and plead with the keeper to tell you what he is doing in heaven? Listen to the angels! Their words are distinctly spoken. It is a most

²³⁰ The Temple Pulpit, II, 78-82. (Preached April 13, 1890.)

²³¹ The Temple Magazine, Vol. III, No. 14, pp. 1-10. (Preached August 2, 1891.)

²³² Ibid., Vol. IV, No. 8, pp. 1-8. (Preached February 21, 1892.) Also in Fields of Glory, pp. 80-89.

²³³ The Temple Review, Vol. XXVI, No. 19, pp. 3-6. (Preached April 28, 1918.)

comprehensive reply to all your inquiries:
 "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."²³⁴

"I wish you a happy New Year" comes at the first of each section of "The Best Gift." "The end is not yet" is the refrain in the sermon of similar name.²³⁵ "Look unto Him [Jesus]" serves the same purpose in "The Race for Life."²³⁶

A final aspect of Conwell's style was his use of loaded words. In almost every sermon appear such words as "home," "father," "mother," "child," "brother," "service," "love," "faith," "good," and "sympathy." He uses phrases such as "religion from the heart," "human liberty," "tears of my parents," "profane shop-hand," "a wandering girl," and "the grave of his mother." A description of Judas Iscariot is in loaded terms.

But, anyhow, there came suddenly an indignation into his heart, -- a violent revolution, and from that moment he was a villain, -- a murderer. He was filled with hypocrisy, and evil motives seemed to combine to make him over into another man.²³⁷

²³⁴ The Temple Pulpit, Vol. II, No. 19, pp. 3-12. (Preached January 18, 1891.)

²³⁵ "The End not Yet," The Temple Magazine, Vol. III, No. 25, pp. 1-9. (Preached October 18, 1891.)

²³⁶ Fields of Glory, pp. 149-158.

²³⁷ "Exceptional Experiences."

In general, Conwell's style had clarity, vividness and impressiveness. Some of his passages may seem overly ornate to the modern critic. However, these quotations have been lifted out of context, thus eliminating the speaker's preparation or build-up for the climax. The audiences of Conwell's day probably expected and enjoyed such "purple patches" from an "orator."

Summary

The themes of Conwell's sermons fall into a four-fold classification: (1) application of Christian principles to daily living; (2) doctrinal messages; (3) the Christian perspective of social problems and current events; and (4) miscellaneous.

The most frequently used forms were: (1) text plus illustrations drawn from various sources; (2) text plus exemplification chiefly from the life of one individual; (3) dramatized Bible narrative; and (4) verse by verse comments on some chapter from the Bible. He infrequently preached a series of sermons. The internal structure of his sermons was loose. One point merged with another with little differentiation. He rarely used signposts or similar devices as a technique of organization. He employed the distributive method of ordering his points rather than the logical or historical.

Conwell's chief type of supporting material was the illustration -- drawn from the Bible, from history, from current events, or from his own personal experience. The Bible was the source for texts for most of his sermons and also for quotations within sermons. Verses from hymns and general literature were cited occasionally. Statistics seldom appeared. Visual aids were employed from time to time. This supporting material was more for amplification than for clarification or proof. There was little direct ethical proof in the sermons; however, Conwell did include some statements which established him as a man of intelligence and of good will. The primary emotional appeal was for service to humanity as a means of demonstrating love of God.

Conwell achieved a measure of clarity, vividness and impressiveness of style through concrete terms, personal address, direct quotation, imagery, rhetorical questions, description, figures of speech, parallelism, repetition and loaded words. In moments of climax there were "purple patches," which probably fulfilled his audience's concept of the language of oratory.

CHAPTER FIVE

EVALUATION

The previous chapters of this study have considered Conwell within the framework of his crowded life. Though major attention focuses on his career as a speaker, the widely divergent vocations and avocations in which he engaged have appeared as well: his exploration of the professions, embracing law, journalism, the army, authorship, public lecturing, teaching, college administration and the ministry; his travels throughout the world with his joyous accounts of them; and his interest in people along with his service to them.

These same chapters have treated Conwell's training, experience, speech philosophy, delivery and basic premises. They have also analyzed his lectures and sermons on the basis of content. It now remains to pull these elements together and to fill in the details for a full view of Conwell, the speaker.

In order to make this evaluation, the present chapter has three divisions. First, there is a comparison of his lectures and sermons in order to provide a unified picture of his speaking. Second, there is a consideration of Conwell's achievements during his life, including the opinions of his contemporaries. Finally, there is an

appraisal of Conwell as a speaker from the perspective of twenty-five years.

A Comparison of the Lectures and the Sermons

Considered as a group, Conwell's lectures and sermons have stimulation as the general purpose. Through all of them run the same ideas and themes -- ways of achieving success and happiness, and emphasis on service to humanity. The stressing of man's relationship to God is, in the main, peculiar to his preaching.

The lectures and sermons are similar in form. His most typical sermon type was that of text with illustrations; the lecture was generally a title story or a statement of purpose plus examples. The distributive method for ordering points is characteristic of all his speaking.

Logical proof was not a strong element in Conwell's oratory. His almost exclusive reliance on illustrations as supporting material precluded a closely reasoned speech with various forms of evidence brought in to support each contention. His chief use of examples was neither to clarify nor to prove but to amplify. In spite of his legal experience he did not construct his speeches so that they would brief logically.

There seems to have been a greater variety of illustrations in his sermons than in his lectures. In the former he drew upon history, the Bible, current events and

his personal experience. In the latter he depended almost entirely upon personal experience. In his sermons Conwell on occasion employed visual aids such as birds, a squirrel, eggs, moss or flowers, but he seemingly did not use similar objects in his lectures. However, in their absence, he probably more than compensated for them through mimicry and pantomime. Nothing appears in his sermons comparable to his imitation of the lady elocutionist kicking her dress train out of the way in "The Silver Crown."

The ways in which the content of the published lectures and sermons established Conwell's ethical proof have been pointed out. His position as a distinguished clergyman and as president of Temple University helped additionally to establish his authority. The fact that he donated his lecture fees to aid college students was probably fairly well known, and doubtless enhanced his standing in the minds of his auditors. The San Francisco Call, reviewing one of his lectures at the local Y. M. C. A., mentions that the proceeds went to a young man seeking an education.¹ The Rochester Democrat and Chronicle indicates that Conwell did not hesitate to mention the way he spent his honorarium. Two hours late in arriving in Rochester because of a storm, Conwell began his lecture:

I'm sorry you're here I had hoped

¹ San Francisco Call, February 6, 1904, p. 9.

you had gone home. I'm not in the best condition to deliver a lecture, for I had only a sandwich for luncheon, and I haven't had a bit of supper. Still, I am in a measure glad you stayed, because if I hadn't delivered this lecture to-night, one poor boy at Cornell would have had to leave. Dr. Strong has said that I give all my money to the church; that's wrong. I think it is a mighty poor church that cannot support itself, and pay its minister. It is a good thing for men to give liberally and I tell my church I am willing they shall double my salary whenever they feel inclined. But the money for this lecture helps a boy in college, and if I didn't deliver it one poor orphan boy would have to drop out.²

Conwell's physical appearance, voice and platform manner have already been discussed. These, too, added to his ethical appeal. In the later years of his career, his reputation preceded him. He was an established figure on the Lyceum and Chautauqua platforms. He rather wryly states that this fore-knowledge was often more of a handicap than a help:

The sense of responsibility is often a heavy burden to a public teacher, and I have found it difficult to carry, at times, especially where I had been over-advertised and over-estimated, and where I felt sure that I could not do all the wonderful things which had been proclaimed I would do.³

Certainly, however, ethical proof was a positive contributor to Conwell's speaking.

There was much emotional appeal in Conwell's speeches. The material of his illustrations offered strong pathetic proof. The folksy stories from his own experience

² Democrat and Chronicle, Rochester, New York, February 13, 1901, p. 10.

³ Burr, p. 337.

doubtless paralleled events in the lives of his hearers. The examples from the biographies of popular heroes -- living and historical -- touched their imagination. His use of humor, detailed descriptions, imagery, figures of speech, and loaded words supplied emotional coloration. In addition, Conwell appealed to motivations common to most of the human family -- the ambition for financial success, the wish for social prestige, the hope for happiness, the altruistic instinct for helping others, and the desire to serve God.

His use of language was fundamentally the same in the lectures and in the sermons. The lectures made greater use of the direct style of address and of humor than the sermons, while the latter included heightened emotional language, more figures of speech, more repetition and more rhetorical questions than the lectures.

Conwell's themes, his treatment of subject matter and his appeals grew out of his fundamental beliefs.

Achievements

One measure of a speaker's effectiveness is whether he attains his desired goals. In his lifetime Conwell achieved a marked degree of success in various fields. As a minister, he saw his church increase from a struggling congregation of less than 300 to one with the largest membership among Protestant churches of the United

States. He baptized nearly 10,000 adults.⁴ Under his leadership, Grace Church founded Temple University, an institution which graduated more than 100,000 persons during Conwell's life and had an enrollment of 10,000 at his death.⁵ The Samaritan, Garretson and Greatheart Hospitals became part of the University Dental and Medical Schools.⁶ Thus Conwell successfully led his congregation in the three-fold ministry of preaching, teaching and healing.

His contemporaries paid Conwell several outstanding honors. In 1913 the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania presented him a gold key to the state. Two years later the state newspapers selected him as one of Pennsylvania's three outstanding men to be honored at the Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco.⁷ With the citation "Teacher, Preacher and Servant of his Fellowman," he won the Philadelphia Award in 1923.⁸ A decade later the Philadelphia public school system honored his memory by placing in the administration building a bust of Conwell, bearing the

⁴ Ibid., p. 27.

⁵ Beury, op. cit. This was Dr. Beury's inaugural address as Temple's second president in May 1926.

⁶ "Acres of Diamonds: A Man, A Lecture, A University," pp. 49-50.

⁷ Burr, pp. 349-350.

⁸ See Duffy, pp. 68-72, for complete details.

caption "Philadelphia's Greatest Recent Educator."⁹ As early as 1901 "Acres of Diamonds" was selected for publication in Modern Eloquence. Shepherd included Conwell in the book, Great Preachers as Seen by a Journalist, published in 1924. The following year, by a poll of 25,000 Protestant ministers, Conwell was chosen as one of America's twenty-five foremost living preachers.¹⁰

The extent to which his speaking ability made possible these achievements cannot be estimated. However, his reputation as a lecturer and pulpit orator indicates that at least in the minds of his contemporaries there was a high degree of correlation between his speaking and his accomplishments.

In their discussion of "The Measures of Effectiveness," Thonassen and Baird declare, "Critics of oratory are generally agreed that the effectiveness of oratory is a function of audience adaptation; that it must be regarded in the light of what people do as a result of hearing the speech."¹¹ Conwell made a conscientious effort to adapt his lectures to the particular audience he was addressing. An explanation of his method as it applied to "Acres of

⁹ Temple University Bulletin, XVI (December 1933), 7.

¹⁰ Morrison.

¹¹ P. 449.

Diamonds" may be found in his introductory remarks to the speech as he delivered it for the five thousandth time.

The lecture "Acres of Diamonds" has in the last few years been delivered on very much the same line, often using the same language; but for the first forty-five years of its delivery it could never be the same in any two places.

. . . this may be of interest to you for me to say that the lecture "Acres of Diamonds" has always been delivered under these circumstances: I would go to a town or city, and try to arrive there early enough to see the postmaster, the barber, the keeper of the hotel, the principal of the schools and the ministers of some of the churches and then go into some of the factories and stores, and talk with the people, and get into sympathy with the local conditions of that town or city and see what had been their history, what opportunities they had and what they had failed to do -- and every town fails to do something --, and then go in and talk to those people about the subjects which applied to their locality.¹²

The purpose of this variation was to arouse and hold the interest of the local people in order that the speaker might put across his point. Conwell states:

It was often startling to the people for an absolute stranger that they never heard of before, and whom they knew had never been within a hundred or five hundred miles of that town, to talk that way. It surprised them greatly for me to refer here and there, all the time, to some local man, or some local shop, or to some local matter in their history. It held their attention until I could fasten the lesson for which I went to that place.¹³

Sometimes Conwell made the study of the community by inquiry

¹² Quay stenographic transcript.

¹³ Ibid.

or reading before his arrival there. A statement to this effect is found in a newspaper article he wrote after delivering the lecture 6100 times.

For many years it has been my habit before giving this address to make a somewhat careful study of the actual conditions of the place in which it is to be given. I first make careful inquiries or do considerable reading about the town or city and find out all that I can as to the people of that place, their varying nationalities, their occupations, et cetera, so that when I give the address there may be something not only constructive but which applies directly to that particular town, its problems and the best means of solving them.¹⁴

To determine the speaker's success in adapting "Acres of Diamonds" to any specific audience is difficult. Copies of the various speeches and surveys of the audiences are not available. A newspaper account of the delivery of the lecture at Westfield, Massachusetts, indicates that there Conwell made recognizable efforts to adapt the speech to his listeners. As special guests at this meeting were the eleven remaining members of the Westfield G. A. R. and "the young women of the Normal School." The Temple University Weekly states that the " . . . audience was spell bound for more than two hours. Dr. Conwell adapted parts of the lecture to the Civil War veterans and other portions appealed to the Normal school students and his friendly old neighbors."¹⁵ In Savannah, Georgia, Conwell

¹⁴ "Now My Idea Is This!" February 15, 1924.

¹⁵ Temple University Weekly, October 17, 1924,

"touched on the many natural advantages of Georgia and the South," stressing the industrial possibilities in lumber and other products.¹⁶ A San Francisco reporter declares, "The audience showed its appreciation even of the frequent scathing criticisms of California and Californians with enthusiastic applause."¹⁷ The Morning Oregonian published an interview with Conwell in which he pointed out the area's potential in timber, water power and prune growing. The same paper covered his lecture in these terms:

Seldom has a lecture been heard in Portland so charged with wisdom and so vital with telling points. It was in itself a liberal education in the matter of grouping the advantages which men possess in this country, and showing how those advantages could be grasped by every man.

Another evidence of Conwell's audience adaptation may be inferred from the following statement:

My wife for years kept a record of what was accomplished in some of the places which we visited, for she always accompanied me on these trips. This record shows that in 35 of the places in which I spoke and which had a stream flowing through the town, developments were carried out by which the possibilities of this stream were used. In none of these places was there either a mill or a dam; the water power which was available was simply going to waste.

When such a town was to be visited I made as careful an estimate as possible of the water power available and of the cost of a dam and explained to the people of the town the

¹⁶ Savannah Morning News.

¹⁷ San Francisco Call.

possibilities in this direction which lay at their doors disregarded. I explained to them that if the now useless stream were dammed and the power thereby generated were used it would earn for them many times what the cost would be.

The records kept by Mrs. Conwell show . . . that in 35 of these places, the advice was followed, and today a very fair percentage of the plants erected and run by this power are large ones. Others have not grown so much, but they are still in existence and earning something for the community in which they were built.¹⁸

Thus, in towns where undeveloped water potential existed, Conwell must have met the local conditions by recommending the construction of dams. That his suggestions were actually followed indicates the success of his adaptations.

Most of the references above are to "Acres of Diamonds." There is little direct evidence on the extent of Conwell's adaptations of the other lectures. However, newspaper articles indicate that the others were well received by those who heard them. The Colorado Springs Gazette reviews "The Silver Crown":

Those who had the good fortune to listen to President Russell H. Conwell's lecture on the subject of "The Silver Crown," last night felt that they had been privileged.

Had the YMCA done nothing more this winter than to open Perkins hall . . . for so brilliant and magnetic an orator, the appreciation of the public would be theirs.

So long as President Conwell continues upon

¹⁸ "Now My Idea Is This!" February 15, 1924.

the lecture platform there will be a brilliant representative of the school of Beecher, Philips [sic] and others of their time.¹⁹

Another report appears in a Portland, Maine, paper, describing "The Silver Crown" as Conwell delivered it before the Maine Teachers Association.

The address of the evening was by Rev. Dr. Russell H. Conwell of Philadelphia, who is known by name at least to everyone in the country. Dr. Conwell took for his subject the Silver Crown, basing it upon an old legend of India It was put in a way all his own and that will linger in the memories of those who were privileged to hear him.²⁰

The Atlanta Constitution calls Conwell "an eloquent and forceful speaker," who "delivered a splendid lecture on 'The Heroism of a Private Life.'"²¹ An account of "The Jelly Earthquake" is in the Nashville American.

It is doubtful if any lecture of the season has been more thoroughly enjoyed.

The Jelly Earthquake is a clever lecture, scintillating with wit and humor, but with a broad underlying current of wisdom.

A few of the jokes . . . were of the vintage of 1857, or thereabouts, but the percentage was probably smaller than is usual.

Altogether a most enjoyable evening was spent by those who braved the badly heated Tabernacle.²²

¹⁹ February 11, 1904, p. 3.

²⁰ Daily Eastern Argus, October 30, 1908, p. 2.

²¹ January 13, 1903, p. 2. The lecture title refers to Daniel Manin, the Venetian patriot.

²² February 6, 1903, p. 8.

The following report of "The Angel's Lily" is from the Daily Republican of Springfield, Massachusetts. "Rev. Dr. Russell H. Conwell gave his lecture on 'The Angel's Lily' Monday evening to a good audience in the First church. The address had the humor and good sense which please those who hear this well-known lecturer."²³ In reviewing "Artemus Ward," the Providence Journal states:

. . . [The] large auditorium was well filled with those anxious to hear Rev. Russell Conwell, D. D., speak on "Artemus Ward."

The lecturer, who has appeared [here] . . . several times in the past few seasons, spoke with his usual wit and kept his audience laughing throughout most of his talk.

The Daily Courant of Hartford, Connecticut, says that "Artemus Ward" was "excellently presented by Russell H. Conwell, who is too well known here to need further introduction."²⁴

There is some indication that even in his old age Conwell was able to adjust himself sufficiently to the audience situation to hold the attention of one of the most difficult of all groups, adolescent boys. Theodore S. Rowland, principal of Philadelphia Northeast High School, writes:

He spoke here to our boys many times, and at least three times delivered his famous

²³ May 5, 1909, p. 7.

²⁴ December 3, 1908, p. 7.

lectures in our auditorium. Two of these lectures I personally heard. The last time he spoke in our auditorium he was quite feeble. I was afraid that he would be unable to climb the stairs to the platform. Yet, for nearly one hour, he held an audience of 2000 boys in the hollow of his hand. It was a remarkable performance by a remarkable man.²⁵

With respect to his sermons, the chief evidences of his successful audience adaptation are the remarkable growth of his congregation and the far-reaching program carried on under the auspices of Grace Church. The chapter on his sermons points out that Conwell frequently preached on the application of Christian principles to daily living and on the Christian perspective on social problems and current events. Some of the topics on which he spoke were divorce, recreational facilities for Philadelphia young people, the trolley strike, the city water system, government ownership of the railroads, the taxation of church property, and opportunities for service in Grace Church. This brief review shows that he selected subjects which directly affected those who heard him.

As evidenced by his material achievements, by the honors he won, and by the reports of his contemporaries, Conwell was a successful speaker in his generation.

²⁵ Letter of Theodore S. Rowland to Dr. Robert Livingston Johnson, February 16, 1943, deposited in Conwellana Collection, Temple University.

Conwell, the Speaker: an Appraisal

From the perspective of slightly more than a quarter of a century, what can be said of Russell H. Conwell as a speaker? What is his place in American oratory?

First of all, he had tremendous energy and vitality. His ability to get projects accomplished, to inspire others to carry through what he envisioned, was great. A part of this effectiveness was probably due to his facility in speech.

A second consideration is the significance of what he said. Conwell was a man of great breadth. The variety of titles in his library and the range of topics on which he preached show the wide scope of his interests. However, neither in his sermons nor in his lectures is there anything to indicate that he saw deeply into any specific issue of his day. Other speakers must have made talks just as significant as his without winning the acclaim that Conwell won.

A third matter is the technical craftsmanship of his speeches. His sermons and lectures do not rank as great models to be studied today. Many of his contemporaries probably spoke on equally valid themes, made better organized speeches, had more varied supporting material, and phrased their talks in more memorable language. Yet Conwell was the one who got results. Part of his success may have been due

to his delivery. Probably more of it was due to that intangible something called personality. What he said about Spurgeon applies to Conwell himself.

It [a sermon by Spurgeon] would move me greatly. But afterward I would read it and feel that the address was . . . weak. The difference was so great it seemed impossible that the printed page could come from the same man. He had that telepathic, or mesmeric, power, so that when he pronounced a word, a sort of spiritual communication between him and his audience was sent through their hearts and through their lives. The impress of his life and spirit was mighty . . .²⁶

Conwell's technique of speech composition was not extraordinary; his ability to communicate with his audience was.

A fourth and most important factor explaining Conwell's success was that he told the people what they wanted to hear. Whether he realized it or not, Conwell mirrored the sentiments of those who listened to him. This is especially true of his most popular lecture, "Acres of Diamonds." Conwell was at a loss to explain why it won the favor of the public. He once introduced it with the paragraph:

I am astonished that so many people should care to hear this story over again. Indeed, this lecture has become a study in psychology; it often breaks all rules of oratory, departs from the precepts of rhetoric, and yet remains the most popular of any lecture I have delivered in the fifty-seven years of my public life. I have sometimes studied for a year upon a lecture and made careful research, and then presented

²⁶ "The Secret Door to the Heart."

the lecture just once -- never delivered it again. I put too much work on it. But this had no work on it -- thrown together perfectly at random, spoken offhand without any special preparation, and it succeeds when the thing we study, work over, adjust to a plan, is an entire failure.²⁷

If the speech were not in tune with the times, why would it have been called for more than 6000 times? Why would it have been delivered annually in some towns for fifteen or twenty years? W. C. Crosby, a post-World War I cynical realist, finds no other reason for the lecture's success. He writes in the Mencken manner:

In villages and towns throughout the Bible Belt, when the Chautauqua season arrived and the tent auditorium was raised to the hallelujahs of the local clergy, Conwell's was the name that headlined the programme. On the night of his lecture, the crowds of farmers and townsmen would sniff self-righteously by the bar-drinking corner loafers and into the tent, to sit spell-bound while the maestre poured forth the Pollyanna economics and saccharine sentiments of his World-Famous Inspirational Lecture The smug, thrifty, tightly moral American middle-class, rustic and urban, knew precisely what it wanted to hear. Conwell rose to fame and opulence by serving it its own ideas, buttered with the authority of a Baptist pontiff and spiced with illustrative stories from the lives of the great.²⁸

The Cases point out that the "many vacuums and hungers in the social scheme of rural America at the turn of the century made the tent circuits possible."²⁹ Chautauqua

²⁷ "Acres of Diamonds: A Man, A Lecture, A University," p. 7.

²⁸ P. 104.

²⁹ P. 181

lectures were pitched for the ears of the audience and arranged to please them.³⁰ These average listeners of rural America are described as "strait-laced, naive, healthy" and "essentially durable," possessed with "the inherent American urge to 'get ahead in life.'"³¹ The Cases add:

Rural Americans of the Chautauqua era were supreme exponents of man's two basic urges: to survive and to advance. To satisfy these imperative urges, under the American way of life, required the possession of material things, which in turn required the wherewithal, the means of acquiring them. In a word, money. To "get ahead" meant to make money. The satisfaction of aesthetic hungers could, and in most cases had to, wait until the cash was at hand

The urge to advance, second only to the urge to survive, was responsible for the phenomenal success of one phase of the overall phenomenon of Chautauqua -- the inspirational lecture. It was the backbone of Chautauqua, the ever reliable, the Old Dependable. A lecture which entertained was good, one which both entertained and uplifted was better, but the cream of them all was the one which both entertained and exalted and also told the individual how he could "get ahead" on a material, down-to-earth, cash basis.³²

The trade name for such an inspirational lecture was the "mother-home-heaven" message.³³ From all the numerous speeches delivered from Chautauqua rostrums across the

³⁰ Ibid., p. 76.

³¹ Ibid., p. 50.

³² Ibid., pp. 61-62.

³³ John S. Noffsinger, Correspondence Schools, Lyceums, Chautauquas (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1926), p. 115.

nation, the Cases single out one for special emphasis:

. . . there was a best Chautauqua lecture, the cream of them all, the model for all those who aspired to Chautauqua lecture fame . . . the outstanding gem of them all was appropriately called "Acres of Diamonds." It had top rating always, and any lecture which could even approach it was sure of an audience.³⁴

Hoffsinger concurs with this appraisal.³⁵

A more scholarly evaluation of the average American of the post-Civil War era may be found in Parrington's Main Currents in American Thought.

. . . the social philosophy [may be summed up] . . . in three words -- Preemption, exploitation, progress . . . Preemption meant exploitation and exploitation meant progress. It was a simple philosophy and it suited the simple individualism of the times.³⁶

The "harvest" of the "doctrine of preemption and exploitation" was "a vast uniform middle-class land, dedicated to capitalism."³⁷ "The idea of progress," he states, "was given over henceforth to the middle class to become the plaything of material expansion."³⁸ When Conwell told this audience to build dams, to earn money through trade, invention, or any other "honest" way, to seize the opportunity in their own community, he seemed to endorse their doctrine of "preemption,

³⁴ P. 62.

³⁵ P. 116.

³⁶ Vernon L. Parrington, Main Currents in American Thought (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1930), III, 9.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 26.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 203.

exploitation and progress."

Frederic L. Paxson describes the United States at the turn of the century in the following terms:

The America of the nineties was impregnated with what some critics described as gross materialism. The history of the nation had seen the rewards of life fall to the individual with spirit and ingenuity. The frontier ideal had everywhere prevailed, and had gloried in the successful surmounting of obstacles. The road from the log cabin to the White House had been traveled more than once, and the other road that led to wealth and business influence was beaten broad and smooth. Public opinion looked upon the successful man as a desirable asset in society. Individuals looked forward to success for themselves as a reasonable expectation, and the resulting popular confidence in personal achievement produced a spirit of complacency in the presence of material comfort.³⁹

Naturally Conwell's words on how to succeed, running through all his lectures, fell upon receptive ears.

The idea of "The Self-Made Man and the Cult of Success" is developed at length by Merle Curti in The Growth of American Thought. He writes:

In the post-Civil War decades the idea of success through self-effort as a possibility for everyone became vastly more popular and widespread than ever before. The men and women responsible for this never-ceasing popularization did not consciously write their stories and their books in order to defend the existing order of private property, competitive enterprise, and corporate wealth. They did so largely because they believed in the reality of what they wrote; and there was certainly a reality behind it. While the cult of the self-made man was being

³⁹ Frederic L. Paxson, Recent History of the United States (Boston, New York, Chicago, San Francisco: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1925), p. 312.

elaborated in the 'seventies, 'eighties, and 'nineties, there was truth in Carnegie's insistence that many of the millionaires in active control had started out as poor boys . . . John D. Rockefeller was tasting the bitterness of relative poverty and then the sweets of incredible material success. Thomas A. Edison was growing from newsboy to world-famous inventor . . . Henry Ford was emerging from a job at two and a half dollars a week polishing steam engines; and Julius Rosenwald, a peddler of chromos, was on his way to the captaincy of a great mail-order business.

But such actualities only in part explain the growth of the cult of the self-made man. The demand for this type of literature was related to the fact that in the years following the Civil War the plain people felt keenly the effects of the contraction of credit, of the recurring periods of depression and unemployment, and of the prevailing downward trend in farm prices. As it became ever more difficult for the small enterpriser to compete with the growing corporation, there was a need for a reaffirmation of the traditional faith that however hard the times, however great the obstacles, America provided opportunity to reach high places. The cult of the self-made man synthesized respect for the older moral virtues with the dream of personal success and belief in the power of the individual to rise above his environment.

Thus the cult served not only to buoy up the discouraged but to confirm faith in the prevailing order. The psychological uses of the idea were well exemplified in the continued popularity of such older proverbs as "Genius thrives on adversity" and "Every man has a goose that lays golden eggs, if he only knew it," and such characteristically American vernacular gems as "There's always room at the top," "Sweat and be saved," and "You can't keep a good man down."⁴⁰

It was the day when Horatio Alger could write 119 success

⁴⁰ Merle Curti, The Growth of American Thought (second edition; New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1943), pp. 645-646.

stories for boys and not exhaust the demand. Slightly higher on the literary scale were the "rags-to-riches" biographies and school readers published by William Makepeace Thayer.⁴¹ Orison Swett Marden produced books which satisfied "those who . . . yearned for an 'intellectual' and 'scientific' reaffirmation of the power of the individual to triumph over any and all odds" ⁴²

Curti adds:

So deep-seated and widespread was the hankering for the literature of individual success that the moralistic biographies of self-made men and the juvenile and adult romances of achievement could not supply the need. In spite of the advance of naturalism and secularism, many preferred to have their success stories crowned by God's sanction. To such men and women Russell Conwell was the last word The great significance of Conwell lay in the message he preached Able to recall thousands of individual success stories, Conwell distilled their essence in the famous Acres of Diamonds It is impossible to estimate the effect of this message upon the millions of middle-class Americans who heard it, but it undoubtedly encouraged many to strive for success by the old-fashioned and "divinely sanctioned" methods of personal effort, and bolstered their support of the prevailing economic and social order in which such individual success was possible "right where you are."⁴³

Curti's conclusion to this entire section of his book is:

Thus in the midst of an advancing order of corporate business, an ideology congenial to it

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 646-648.

⁴² Ibid., p. 649.

⁴³ Ibid.

gradually emerged. This ideology was derived in part from deep-rooted folk ideas, in part from the sanctions of religion, in part from concepts of natural science. But whatever the source, its arguments rested upon the concepts of individualism, equality of opportunity, and the promise of well-being under a profit economy. The conservative defense . . . was popularized in sermons, speeches, novels, slogans, and essays. It became part and parcel of American popular thought.⁴⁴

Further evidence that Conwell was the spokesman for the ideas of many who heard him may be found in his changing economic attitudes as revealed in his sermons. By 1924 instead of praising millionaires he was wondering how such men as "Mr. Duke" or "Mr. Rockefeller" could have amassed their fortunes. Conwell decided that it was impossible for Duke or Rockefeller to have earned that money, that "the reasonable fact [was that] . . . workingmen and workingwomen earned all that money, except the millionaire's reasonable salary."⁴⁵

Conwell was a man of tremendous energy and vitality, with the ability to get things done. He may not have made speeches that were models of technical skill or noteworthy for their individual significance, but he could communicate effectively with his hearers. Part of his success may have been due to his delivery or to his personality. However, a major factor was probably that he was the voice

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 656.

⁴⁵ "Giving Effectively."

of his time -- he mirrored the sentiments of a great portion of his audience.

Conwell is noteworthy among American orators not for the ideas he expressed nor for the technical excellence of his speeches, but for his ability to communicate effectively with his audiences and for his position as a typical spokesman of his generation.

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Candidate: Mary Louise Gehring

Major Field: Speech

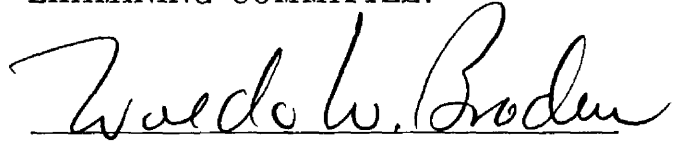
Title of Thesis: A Rhetorical Study of the Lectures and Sermons of
Russell H. Conwell

Approved:

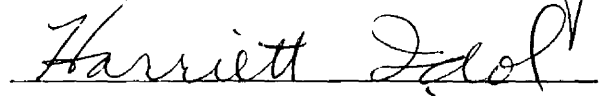

Major Professor and Chairman


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EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

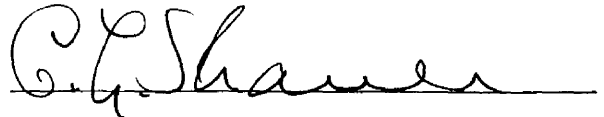

Waide W. Broden


George W. Conwell


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Date of Examination:

July 29, 1952